

# St. Louis County Police Department

## Frequently Asked Policy Questions



Due to recent events, many community members have inquired about the policies and practices of local police departments. The purpose of this document is to respond to some of those commonly asked questions and provide links to documents with more information and resources for citizens. As shown below, the St. Louis County Police Department has policies which recognize the frequently referenced '8 Can't Wait' policies. Most of these policies have been in existence for many years.

### Topic: Use of Force

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department ban chokeholds and strangleholds?

**Answer:** Yes. The Department's [Use of Force](#) policy provides, "*Officers are not authorized to use chokeholds, neck restraints, shoulder pins or similar weaponless control techniques with a potential for serious injury.*"

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department require a warning before shooting?

**Answer:** Yes, if possible. The Department's [Use of Force](#) policy provides, "*If feasible, a verbal warning shall be given prior to the use of deadly force.*" Officers may encounter situations where a warning is not feasible before the use of deadly force. In some situations, a warning could endanger citizens or officers.

**Question:** Do officers have to exhaust all other means before shooting?

**Answer:** Yes. Officers shall only use force when other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted or would likely be ineffective under a particular set of circumstances. All the criteria for deadly force can be found in the Department's [Use of Force](#) policy.

**Question:** Are officers prohibited from shooting at moving vehicles?

**Answer:** Yes. The Department's [Use of Force](#) policy provides that firearms shall not be discharged in the following circumstances, "*At or from a moving vehicle, unless the occupant(s) of the vehicle represents a direct and immediate threat to the life or safety of the officer or an innocent person, and then only as a last resort; Officers shall avoid tactics that could place them in a position where a vehicle could be used as a weapon against them (i.e., reaching into the vehicle to turn the car off and secure the keys, approaching the vehicle from the front, etc.). When confronted with an oncoming vehicle, officers shall make every attempt to move out of its path.*" The intent of the policy is to prevent officers from creating risk and thereby lowering the chance that force will be used.

**Question:** Are officers required to de-escalate before using force?

**Answer:** Yes, if possible. The Department's [Use of Force](#) policy provides in section III.A, "*Where deadly force is not authorized, officers should assess the incident in order to determine which nondeadly technique or less lethal weapon will best de-escalate the incident and bring it under control in a safe manner.*" In addition,

section IV.D. provides, *"While the use of reasonable physical force may be necessary in situations which cannot be otherwise controlled, force may not be resorted to unless other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted or would likely be ineffective under a particular set of circumstances."*

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department require reporting each time an officer uses force?

**Answer:** Yes, for applied force. The Department's [Use of Force](#) policy provides, *"The precinct watch commander or appropriate bureau commander must be notified immediately whenever an officer uses or attempts to use force under extraordinary circumstances that vary from the standard handcuffing process or detention techniques."* Supervisors are required to respond to the scene of the use of force to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident. That investigation is then reported through the chain of command, ultimately being reviewed by the Chief of Police. Annually, a report is published summarizing the force used by St. Louis County Police Officers. The report can be found in the [Bureau of Professional Standards Report](#). Please note that officers are not required to report a display of force.

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department require officers to intervene to stop excessive use of force?

**Answer:** Yes. St. Louis County Officers are bound by conduct and discipline rules found in the Department's [Conduct and Discipline Manual](#). Article 16.5 of the manual requires that officers take appropriate action to protect life and property and otherwise enforce all federal, state, and local laws. An officer engaging in excessive force may be committing an assault, and another officer would, therefore, be required to act to stop the assault. In addition to those regulations, officers are required by Section VI.B. of the [Use of Force](#) policy to report excessive force immediately.

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department regulate how citizens are restrained and transported to jail?

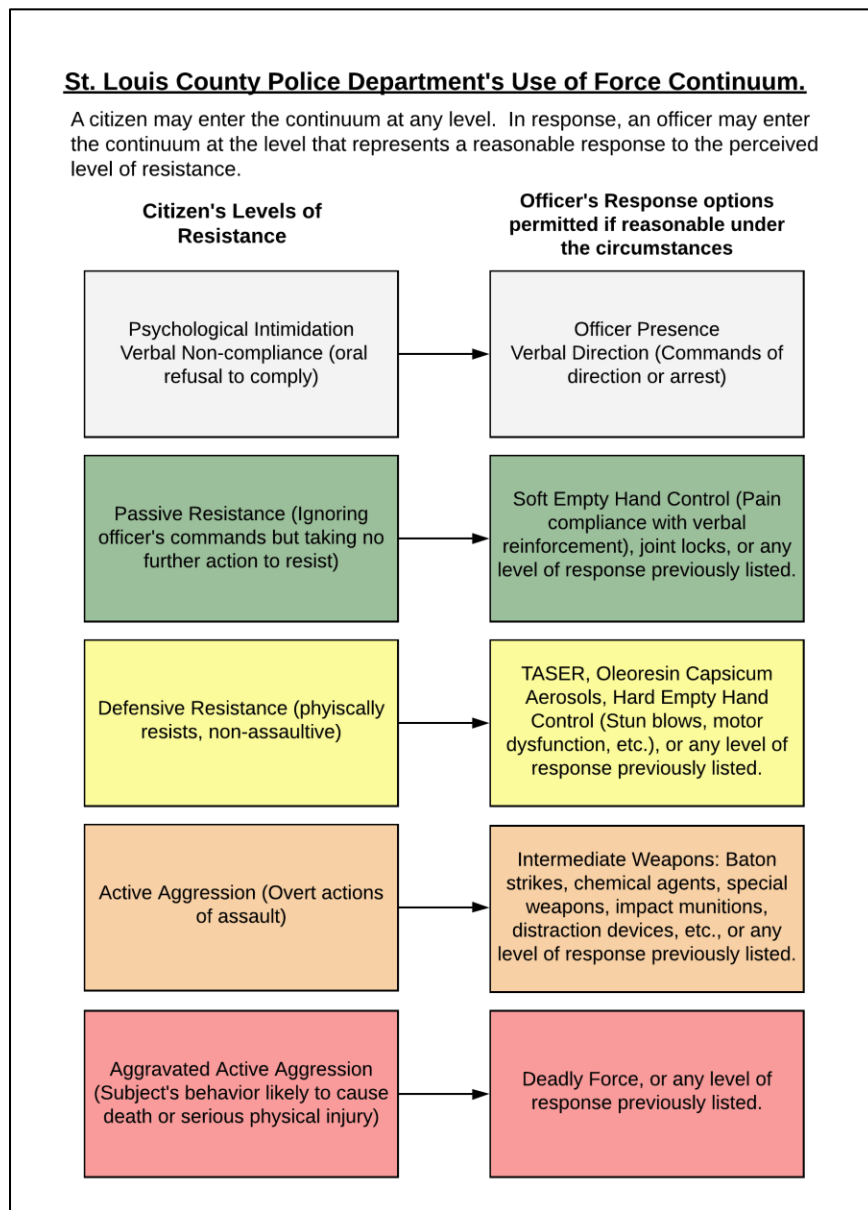
**Answer:** Yes. The [Prisoner Security and Accountability](#) policy regulates the transport of arrested citizens. Section IV.B.3 prohibits restraining citizens in a manner that causes positional asphyxia (suffocation).

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department contribute to national efforts to research and understand use of force?

**Answer:** Yes. The Department contributes data to the Center for Policing Equity's [National Justice Database](#) and the F.B.I.'s [National Use of Force Data Collection](#). The St. Louis County Police Department supports efforts to analyze and understand force incidents and their impact on communities.

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department have a use of force continuum?

**Answer:** Yes. The use of force continuum is a tool designed to guide and regulate the type of force response officers use for different levels of resistance presented by citizens. Use of force continuums vary in content and design depending on the police department but are critical to understanding a department's force policy. The St. Louis County Police Department's continuum is found in section V. of the Department's [Use of Force](#) policy and reproduced in the figure below.



## Topic: Citizen Complaints

**Question:** Are St. Louis County Police Officers required to report the misconduct of other officers?

**Answer:** Yes. The [Department's Complaint Review](#) Policy provides, "*Any nonsupervisory employee of this Department having witnessed or having reliable knowledge that another employee has violated any rule, regulation, policy or procedure of this Department shall report that knowledge immediately to a supervisory employee.*" Supervisors have the same responsibility.

**Question:** Can a citizen read the complaints against officers or review the personnel history of an officer?

**Answer:** No. Under the [Missouri Sunshine Law](#), personnel records of public employees are closed records.

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department have an early intervention system?

**Answer:** Yes. The Department's early intervention system is the [Guidance Program](#). It is designed to identify employees who have established a pattern of behavior inconsistent with professional police conduct or established police procedures.

**Question:** Does the St. Louis County Police Department have civilian oversight?

**Answer:** Yes. The St. Louis County Police Department Board of Police Commissioners is a civilian oversight board with five members representing the citizens of St. Louis County. The Board of Police Commissioners is the final authority on the policies of the Department.

## Topic: Hiring and Training

**Question:** How are St. Louis County Police Officers vetted before being hired?

**Answer:** During the [Selection Process](#) with the Department, officers undergo a thorough background investigation. The background investigation includes an extensive review of work, criminal and personal history, as well as many interviews, a polygraph examination, and a psychological evaluation.

**Question:** How much initial training do St. Louis County Officers receive?

**Answer:** Newly hired officers receive [916 hours of police academy training](#) or 23 weeks. The state of Missouri only requires 600 hours. Once an officer completes academy training, the officer undergoes a field training program for an additional 12 weeks of training.

**Question:** How much training do St. Louis County Police Officers receive annually?

**Answer:** The State of Missouri requires [24 hours annually](#). St. Louis County Officers average 40 to 50 hours per year.

**Question:** Do St. Louis County Officers get training on issues relevant to community relations and de-escalation?

**Answer:** Yes. St. Louis County Officers have attended the following in-person training sessions over the last five years. The list is only a sample of the training and not inclusive of all training.

- 2015-2017: All police officers received Fair and Impartial Policing (Department of Justice Recommended Program) during continuing education training.
- 2018: All police officers received de-escalation training and training focused on a better understanding of the role the Constitution plays in the practice of procedural justice-based policing in America.
- 2019: The Department contracted with Randy Means (a nationally recognized expert on the application of the Constitution in police practice) to present an eight-hour program to all police officers entitled "Constitutional-Bias Free Policing."
- 2020: The St. Louis County and Municipal hosted classes on Human Behavior Pattern Recognition, which is a scientific approach to identifying potential threats and criminal activity based on behaviors rather than arbitrary factors such as race or appearance. HBPR provides officers with the tools to reduce inadvertent racial profiling while providing them with easily recognizable and articulable facts to support their decision making in the field.

In addition to the training courses, the St. Louis County Police Department is a leading agency in the use of the [Crisis Intervention Team](#) (CIT) as a form of de-escalation. Using CIT allows citizens who are suffering from mental illness and substance abuse to be diverted from the criminal justice system to the community's system of care.

## Topic: Policy

**Question:** How does the St. Louis County Police Department create policies?

**Answer:** The Department's policies are formed through a process that involves extensive research and review influenced by best practices, case law, statutes, and public sentiment. The structure and content are often guided by [CALEA](#) standards and [IACP](#) best practices.

**Question:** How does the St. Louis County Police Department ensure that its policies are up to date?

**Answer:** Department staff annually reviews all policies. In addition, [CALEA](#) assessors review the policies and procedures associated with accreditation standards every year during an annual online assessment. Every four years, [CALEA](#) assessors conduct an on-site assessment that includes ride-alongs and interviews with staff and community members.