

De-escalation Techniques:

Limiting the Use of Force in Public Interaction



Course # 1849

Revised September 2025

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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to assist the instructor in developing an appropriate lesson plan to teach the course learning objectives. The learning objectives are the minimum required content of the De-escalation Techniques: Limiting the Use of Force in Public Interaction. This course is a required course to be completed:

- By an officer holding only a basic proficiency certificate, at least once every 48 months
- As a requirement for an intermediate proficiency certificate
- As a requirement for an advanced certificate

This requirement takes effect as of April 1, 2018.

Note to Trainers: It is the responsibility of the coordinator to ensure this curriculum and its materials are kept up to date. Also refer to curriculum and legal resources for changes in subject matter or laws relating to this topic as well as the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement website at www.tcole.texas.gov for edits due to course review.

Target Population: Peace Officers working toward their intermediate, and advanced proficiency certificate on or after April 1, 2018.

Student Pre-Requisites:

- None

Instructor Pre-Requisites:

- Certified TCOLE Instructor and documented knowledge/training in course subject matter OR
- Documented subject matter expert

Length of Course: Minimum of 8 hours

Training Options: Refer to graphic below for presentation options for this course. The highlighted “classroom” means that **this course can only be taught as a classroom version.**

CLASSROOM

~~BLENDED~~

~~e-LEARNING~~

~~ANY OPTION~~

Method of Instruction:

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Scenario and role-play activities
- Videos

Assessment:

Assessment is required for completion of this course to ensure the student has a thorough comprehension of all learning objectives. Training providers are responsible for assessing student mastery of all objectives and documenting the validation tool utilized in this course.

Reference materials:

- Senate Bill 1849
- Occupations Code 1701

Resources:

- Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (<http://www.policeforum.org/icat>) "Training Guide for Defusing Critical Incidents"

De-Escalation Strategies

Instructor Note:

Agencies may adopt the Police Executive Research Forum's Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) course modules 2, 3, 4, 5, and selected scenarios from module 6 to meet the learning objectives. PERF ICAT Module 6 does not have to be completed in its entirety, only to the extent of completion of this curriculum section 6 objectives. If an agency does not adopt the ICAT program, the learning objectives listed below must be met by any curricula used to instruct de-escalation strategies.

The PERF ICAT program including instructor guides, lesson plans, presentations, and video links is available for use at this location:

<http://www.policeforum.org/icat-training-guide>

Unit 1 Goal: Explain the purpose and focus of a de-escalation training.

DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES: The critical decision-making model provides officers with an organized way of making decisions about how they will act in any situation, including situations that may involve uses of force.

1.1 Describe the key principles of the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM).

- Police ethics
- The values of the police agency
- Proportionality
- The sanctity of the human life

1.2 Explain each of the five steps of the CDM.

- Step 1: Collect information
- Step 2: Assess situation, threats, and risks
- Step 3: Consider police powers and agency policy
- Step 4: Identify options and determine best course of action
- Step 5: Act, review, and re-assess

1.3 Articulate the benefits of the CDM.

- Organize the decision-making process
- Assists officers to make better decisions
- Assists officers in explaining their actions after the incident to provide a structured, rational explanation increasing credibility

1.4 Use the CDM to describe the actions of a police officer handling a critical incident, through a video case study.

- Obtain and review a video case study of an actual incident, as seen through an officer's body-camera or dash-cam and analyze how the officers' actions fit with the critical decision-making model (CDM).
- Include in the class discussion, indicators of the presence of implicit bias.

Unit 2 Goal: Incidents involving persons in crisis.

2.1 Successfully identify behaviors associated with a person experiencing behavioral crisis.

- Individual not responding to verbal commands.
- Lack of coherence
- Agitated
- Talking to themselves
- Poor hygiene

2.2 Recognize principles and best practices for effectively responding to a person in behavioral crisis.

- Your mission is not to diagnose or treat/solve issues.
- Top priority is to verbally defuse and stabilize the situation.
- Try to get person to a state where they can function and better reason, where voluntary compliance can be achieved.

2.3 Use some common tips and techniques for engaging and making a connection with a person in behavioral crisis.

- Request backup and specialized help.
- Don't rush the situation (unless immediate action is required).
- Focus on calming the situation and minimize the stress level.
- Continually assess and re-assess (Use the CDM model).
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Active listening
- Watch body language (theirs and yours).
- Always be respectful, never dismissive.

2.4 Describe and recognize the value of the emotional–rational thinking scale.

- As emotions rise, rational thinking declines.
- Lowering someone's emotions can help them think more rationally and make better decisions.
- Won't always be possible, but always worth a try.

Unit 3 Goal: Effective communication skills

3.1 Use a range of communications skills to their tactical advantage.

- Brainstorm and list the attributes of a police officer the student knows with good communication skills.
- How do those communication skills become a tactical advantage?

3.2 Explain the concepts and importance of active listening and demonstrate the use of key active listening skills.

- Paying close attention to what others are saying as well as what they are communicating non-verbally, through gestures and body language.
- 80% of your time is spent listening and 20% talking (80/20 rule).
- In listening, your goal is to understand and gather information about what the person is thinking and feeling.
- Avoid distractions.
- Show the subject that you are listening carefully.
- Use silence to your advantage.

3.3 Explain how non-verbal communications affect interactions with others and demonstrate the use of key non-verbal communications skills.

- Project the right body language.
- Make eye contact and use open-handed gestures.
- Modulate your tone of voice.

3.4 Demonstrate key verbal communications skills that are critical to defusing tense situations and gaining voluntary compliance.

- Use the team concept.
- Establish rapport.
- Ask questions or make requests clearly, and one at a time.
- Ask open-ended questions, especially “what” and “how” questions.
- Encourage conversation, but do not dominate it.
- Provide options.
- Emotional contagion.

3.5 Develop and use a variety of alternatives to hostile-sounding phrases.

Develop and practice alternatives to hostile-sounding adversarial phrases for situations that occur in policing.

- Adversarial phrase: “What’s your problem”
 - Alternative: “What can I do to help you?”
- Adversarial Phase: “Calm down”
 - Alternative: “I see that you are upset. Please tell me about it.”

Unit 4 Goal: Key concepts to critical incidents.

4.1 Demonstrate critical pre-response and response requirements for critical incidents.

- Recognize the nature of the incident and practice effective responses for the different types of incidents.
- Communicate well with the subject of the incident and with other officers and persons who are involved in the response.
- Use sound tactics.

4.2 Explain use of the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) in responding to and managing a critical incident.

- Collect information
- “Tactical pause”
- Preparing yourself

4.3 Demonstrate and explain key tactical expectations and roles when responding to a critical incident as a team.

- Everyone should have a key role and should know what their role is.
- Only one officer should be communicating with the subject.
- Other roles as personnel arrives at the scene would be providing cover, using less-lethal weapons, establishing perimeters etc.

4.4 Explain concepts such as “tactical pause,” “distance + cover = time,” and “tactical repositioning.”

- Tactical Pause: Officers must be prepared to act as soon as they arrive on the scene. But if there is no immediate threat and have time to “slow the situation down”, they should use that to their tactical advantage.
- Distance + cover = time: When officers are in close quarters with a potential threat and they feel pressed for time, options quickly dwindle. But when officers have distance, cover, and time, their options multiply.
- Tactical repositioning: maintaining a position of advantage and a safety zone.

4.5 Participate in an effective after-action review (AAR) of a critical incident.

- Conducted to uncover and document strengths weaknesses of the response to an incident.
- Part of a continuous learning and improvement process
- Purpose: to improve future performance.
- Include the topic of implicit bias in your review of the incident.

4.6 Use the CDM to explain key post-response expectations following a critical incident.

- The CDM, which guides thinking during a critical incident, also serves as a tool for examining decision-making after the fact.

- AAR's are designed to answer the questions contained in the CDM.

Unit 5 Goal: Responding to critical incidents.

5.1 Review the key concepts covered in previous unit goals.

- Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM)
- Crisis recognition and response
- Tactical communication
- Emotional contagion
- Operational safety tactics

5.2 Discuss the use of the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) in managing and resolving a critical incident.

- A case-study from written report, video, or PERF ICAT resources to complete this objective.

5.3 Demonstrate their ability to put concepts into practice through successful completion of scenario-based training exercises.

- Use a departmental scenario or PERF ICAT resource to complete this objective.