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Police Training and Standards Commission

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In accordance with §3-207 (A) (19), the Police Training and Standards Commission (PTSC) herein adopts and recommends a set of best practices and standards for the use of force by law enforcement officers.

Officers are encouraged to defuse rather than intensify confrontations with and between citizens. When time, circumstances, and safety permit, officers should take steps to gain compliance and control a situation without using physical force. Examples include: The use of advisements, warnings and persuasion; attempts to slow down or stabilize the situation so that more time, options and resources are available; a show of authority or simply “waiting out” a situation. Officers should consider whether a subject’s lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or is caused by an inability to comply.

Protocols and Standards for Use of Force

- 1) Include a “sanctity of life” statement in department policy. I.e., recognition of, and respect for the dignity of all persons and the value of human life shall guide all training, leadership, and procedures, as well as guide officers in the use of force.
- 2) Include a “duty to intervene” statement to department policy. I.e., any officer who observes another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall intercede, where feasible, to prevent the use of such excessive force, so long as it does not pose a safety risk. Officers shall promptly report these observations to a supervisor.
- 3) Use of Force/Degree of Force policy should state that officers may use the force that is objectively reasonable and appears to be necessary under the circumstances in response to the threat or resistance by a subject.
- 4) Include de-escalation in written policy. When time, circumstances and safety permit, officers should take steps to gain compliance and de-escalate conflict without using physical force. Examples include: The use of advisements, warnings, and persuasion; attempts to slow down or stabilize the situation so that more time, options and resources are available; Officers should consider whether a subject’s lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or is caused by an inability to comply.
- 5) Require officers to render basic first aid to subjects injured as a result of police action and promptly request medical assistance.
- 6) Require supervisors to respond to the scene of any incident during which an officer used physical force and where actual injury occurs. Supervisors should gather and review all known video recordings of a use of force incident.
- 7) Document use of force incidents.
- 8) Provide for supervisory review of use of force reports, including review by commanders.

- 9) Develop an early warning system to monitor excessive incidents involving use of force by department members.
- 10) Provide officers with access to and training options that are less likely to cause death or serious injury, and techniques to reduce the need to use force. Include the use of scenario based training.
- 11) Officers need training on De-escalation, including the use of scenario based training.

Use of Force Training Concepts and Best Practices

- 1) De-escalation training. Purpose is for officers to cultivate skills to defuse but still maintain control to bring situation to a safe conclusion. Focus on communication skills, crisis intervention techniques, minimizing force, and tactical repositioning. Officers should try to slow an incident down and think their way through a high risk situation. Officers should attempt to recognize warning signs of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Officers should use all available resources and training to attempt to resolve incidents and minimize the need to use force.
- 2) Sanctity of Life. Respect the value of every human life. Deadly force should only be used in extreme circumstances and when reasonably necessary.
- 3) Ethical protector. Officers should act with compassion toward others and be courageous in the face danger.
- 4) Use of Force Policy. Officers may only use that amount of force that is reasonable and appears to be necessary to achieve a lawful objective. Officers must act within the scope of their duties as law enforcement officers. The goal of any use of force is to gain control of a resistant or assaultive subject.
- 5) Force definition and reporting. Force is defined as any physical coercion used to affect, persuade, or influence a subject to comply with a lawful order. All force must be immediately reported to a supervisor with the exception of un-resisted escorts or un-resisted handcuffing.
- 6) Deadly Force. An officer may use deadly force to stop an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person. Serious injury is permanent impairment or disfigurement. Deadly force is any force that is likely to cause death or serious injury.
- 7) Less Lethal Force Training. Officers will be trained and equipped with less lethal weapons that may assist them in controlling resistant or assaultive behavior. "Less lethal weapons" are those weapons that are expected to create less risk of causing serious injury or death.
- 8) Shooting at Vehicles. Officers are discouraged from shooting at vehicles. An officer may only shoot at the operator of a vehicle if he/she is using that vehicle as a deadly weapon toward the officer or another person and deadly force is the only reasonable means available to stop that threat. Training should emphasis the dangers associated with shooting at a moving vehicle.
- 9) Implicit bias training. Training officers to recognize and understand the often automatic association people make between groups of people and stereotypes. Under certain conditions, those automatic associations can influence behavior making people respond in biased ways even when they are not explicitly prejudiced.
- 10) Duty to intervene. Officers who have an opportunity to intervene in another officer's excessive use force must do so or risk potential liability, including a civil rights violation based upon their failure to intervene. Agencies may likewise be liable where there is a custom or failure in training, supervision or discipline that leads to the constitutional violation.
- 11) Policy and legal review updates including constitutional standards. Training will consist of reviewing policy and constitutional law surrounding the application and use of force, limitations and legal implications. It is crucial the law enforcement agencies develop clear and concise policies relative to use of force by its officers. It is equally important that officers be familiar through refresher courses and hands-on practical training.