

	Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives	DIRECTIVE: 450-012 De- Escalation
		EFFECTIVE DATE: November 29, 2018
	SUBJECT: De-Escalation	REVISED DATE: January 14, 2023

PURPOSE

This directive aims to establish de-escalation procedures for the HISD Police Department. This directive applies to all Houston Independent School District Police Department officers.

POLICY

De-escalation tactics and techniques are actions taken by an officer seeking to minimize the need to use force during an incident and increase voluntary compliance by a subject. These tactics improve the safety of the officer and subject, reduce the likelihood of injury, improve community relations, reduce citizen complaints, and are consistent with the department's procedural justice philosophy.

PROCEDURES

De-escalation tactics shall be used whenever possible when such delay will not compromise the safety of the officer or a citizen and when it is not immediately necessary for an officer to take action to prevent the officer or a citizen from being assaulted or injured. De-escalation shall also be used when time and circumstances reasonably permit a person to attempt to escape or respond to a person committing a crime. When considering the totality of the circumstances, an officer shall use de-escalation tactics to slow down or stabilize a situation so that more time, options, and resources may become available for incident resolution. The totality of the circumstances may include but is not limited to the seriousness of the crime, danger to the public, and threat to officers and citizens.

It must also be recognized that when de-escalation techniques are applied, force may still be required to resolve an incident. However, de-escalation may result in lower levels of force than if no de-escalation tactics/techniques are utilized.

OFFICER RESPONSIBILITY

When dealing with a non-compliant subject and time and circumstances reasonably permit, the officer shall consider whether the subject is affected by conditions such as:

- a) Medical issues;
- b) Mental impairment or mental health crisis;
- c) Developmental disability;
- d) Physical limitation;

- e) Communication barrier;
- f) Alcohol and drug use; and
- g) Behavioral/emotional crisis.

When time and circumstances allow for de-escalation, an officer's awareness of the above conditions shall be balanced against the totality of the circumstances when determining which de-escalation options(s) are the most appropriate to attempt to bring the situation to a safe resolution. Options to de-escalate a situation include, but are not limited to:

- a) Calling for more resources, such as:
 - 1. Additional officers/supervisors;
 - 2. A CIT officer;
 - 3. Officers equipped with less-lethal devices;
 - 4. A bilingual officer;
 - 5. Emergency Medical Services; and
 - 6. Other specialty units.
- b) Utilizing available barriers between the non-compliant subject and the officer.
- c) Containing and limiting the movement of the subject.
- d) Reducing the officer's threat of danger or exposure by moving to a safer position considering:
 - 1. Distance;
 - 2. Cover and concealment.
- e) Communicating with the subject from a safe position by:
 - 1. Using verbal persuasion and explanation to promote rational decision-making; and
 - 2. Giving clear direction and allowing the subject time to comply.
- f) Short-term disengagement from the situation creates more time to observe the subject and plan for redeployment.
- g) Complete disengagement when it is in the best interest of justice.
- h) Any other tactics attempting to achieve law enforcement objectives by gaining compliance from the subject.

To properly de-escalate a situation, an officer must also consider other factors when determining what techniques will lead to resolving an incident. These factors include:

- a) Recognizing factors that increase subject and officer escalation rather

than de-escalation;

- b) Environmental considerations;
- c) Identifying limitations to the officer's ability to communicate with the subject; and
- d) Creating a plan for resolving the incident and communicating the plan to other officers/supervisors, etc.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY (RESPONSE TO RESISTANCE REVIEW)

Each officer is responsible for attempting tactical de-escalation efforts consistent with their training. Circumstances are unique to each event and may dictate if an officer can reasonably de-escalate. De-escalation and related tactics will be evaluated as part of the departmental administrative review via the chain of command for each reportable response to resistance event.

Supervisors must explain why de-escalation was inappropriate or how it was used. When related to the response to resistance, the findings of this evaluation will be addressed as a separate matter from the incident resulting in the investigation. De-escalation will not be used to determine whether using force is justified or appropriate. The response to resistance administrative review will determine if the guidelines were followed according to the Response to Resistance Directive 422-109.

Approved By


Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police