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6-25-2019

Changes in Student Definitions of De-Escalation in Professional Peace Officer Education

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Recommended Citation

Nelson, P. (2019, June 25). *Changes in student definitions of de-escalation in professional peace office education* [Conference presentation]. International Conference on Criminal Justice 2019, Paris, France.

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Changes in Student Definition of De-escalation in Professional Peace Officer Education

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Big ideas. Real-world thinking.

Why focus on De-Escalation

- “Law enforcement agency policies for training on use of force should emphasize de-escalation and alternatives to arrest or summons in situations where appropriate”
 - 2.2.1 Action Item
 - *The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing*

Why focus on De-Escalation

- “Relying on hospital security more familiar with the health care clientele and staff, with an emphasis on de-escalation, will make the environment safer”
 - Dr. Jon Pryor, CEO of Hennepin Healthcare
 - *Star Tribune, December 14, 2018*

No wonder it is not clear

- Basic de-escalation skills training is designed to equip police officers with knowledge and skills that enable them to initiate specific actions to de-escalate a crisis situation



The sample



- Juniors
- 60-90 credits
- PPOE Program
- Law Enforcement Mindset Class
- 47 unique samples

On the right track: Pre-Test

- 8 out of 47 submissions
- Most common terms
 - Calm
 - Communication
 - Reasonable
 - Bring Down
 - Multiple Tools



On the right track: Post Test

- “Turning a situation or conversation from very high energy or tense, to a calmer and less tense”
- “It is the ability to resolve conflict through words rather than the use of force”
- “Stopping the situation from escalating further”
- “The process of bringing the level of agitation down through the use of many tools but primary ones voice and mind”

On the right track: Changes

- Expanding definitions
 - Crisis
 - Time
 - Distance
 - Cover
 - Disengagement
 - Isolate
 - Contain



In the Middle: Pre-Test

- 31 out of 47 submissions
- Most Common Themes
 - Mindset (Obnoxious, Out of Control)
 - Peaceful
 - Stress Level (hyped up, upset)
 - Talking



LAW &
ORDER

In the Middle: Post Test

- “Someone’s mindset is out of control and they can’t get back to normal by themselves. Someone else has to step in and control the situation”
- “To bring the level of threat of force down”
- “When a situation goes from hot to cold usually de-escalation happens when good communication is used and less force.”
- “Trying to transition something that is obnoxious and making it better”

In the Middle: Changes



- Changes
 - More Communication
 - Active Listening Skills
 - Positioning
 - Pacing
 - Slowing Down
- Lacking
 - Physical Space
 - Disengagement

Still in TV Land: Pre-Test

- 8 out of 47 submissions
- Most Common Themes
 - Normal
 - Out of Control
 - Violence/Danger
 - Tension
 - Fast Decisions/Quickly



Still in TV Land: Post Test

- “Bring down the stakes of what is going on and to decrease the amount of perceived crazyness [sic]”
- “Stopping the person before it gets bigger or he or she gets out of hand.”
- “To make an issue less of an issue. If there is a problem deescalating it would make it less of a problem, almost like calming down.”
- “The process of a situation returning back to normal operations.”

Still in TV Land: Changes



- Changes
 - Use of Communication
 - Listening
 - Removing Force as First Option
- Lacking
 - Physical space
 - Disengagement
 - Slowing down
 - Patience

Implications

- Need to expand definition in coursework
 - Communication
 - Time
 - Distance
 - Cover



Future Research



- Current LEO understanding of definition.
- Reinforcement of de-escalation techniques in agencies

References

- Mannix, A. (2018, December 14). Hennepin Healthcare cuts ties with sheriff, considers arming security force. Star Tribune, retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/hennepin-healthcare-cuts-ties-with-sheriff-considers-arming-security-force/502829881/>
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- President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. (2015) *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, DC.