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3-27-2019

De-escalation: What Does That Mean Anyway?

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Recommended Citation

Nelson, P. (2019, March 27). *De-escalation: What does it mean anyway?* [Conference presentation]. 2019 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, USA.

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De-Escalation

What Does that Mean Anyway?

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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, such as that included in the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training curriculum, is a law enforcement training experience designed to equip police officers with knowledge and skills that enable them to initiate specific actions to de-escalate a crisis situation

The sample

- 52 submissions
- Juniors
- 60 credits
- Professional Peace Officer Education Program
- Law Enforcement Mindset Class

On the right track

- 8 out of 52 submissions
- Most common terms
 - Calm
 - Communication
 - Reasonable
 - Bring Down
 - Multiple Tools

On the right track

- “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”

In the Middle

- 31 out of 52 submissions
- Most Common Themes
 - Mindset (Obnoxious, Out of Control)
 - Peaceful
 - Stress Level (hyped up, upset)
 - Talking

In the Middle

- “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”

We have a lot of work to do

- 13 out of 52 submissions
- Most Common Themes
 - Normal
 - Out of Control
 - Violence/Danger
 - Tension

We have a lot of work to do

- “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.”

Implications

- Cannot assume students know what de-escalation is
- Need to expand definition
 - Communication
 - Time
 - Distance
 - Cover

Future Research

- Change in understanding of definition after class
- Understanding of variety of techniques
- Current LEO understanding of definition.

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/>
- Oliva, J., Morgan, R., & Compton, M. (2010). A practical overview of de-escalation skills in law enforcement: Helping individuals in crisis while reducing police liability and injury. *Journal of Crisis Negotiations*, 10(1), pp. 15-29. doi: 10.1080/15332581003785421
- President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. (2015) *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, DC.