

# San Diego Countywide Crisis Management Philosophy

## Considerations for De-Escalation

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Law enforcement is guided by the overarching principle of reverence for human life in all investigative, enforcement, and other interactions between law enforcement and members of the community. San Diego County Law Enforcement Agencies are committed to providing peace officers with the training, equipment and resources necessary to encourage peaceful resolutions.

### PHILOSOPHY

Every situation law enforcement responds to is unique. When law enforcement is called upon to respond to a crisis or criminal acts, they will if reasonable under the circumstances, use tactics and techniques to persuade the individual to voluntarily comply or mitigate the need to use increased physical tactics to resolve the situation safely. Some situations require an immediate response, while other situations may allow peace officers the opportunity to communicate with the individual, refine tactical plans, and, if necessary, call for additional resources. When reasonable opportunity exists, peace officers should consider the concepts of Pre-Engagement, De-Escalation and Disengagement, consistent with the definitions provided in this document.

### DEFINITIONS

**Pre-Engagement Considerations:** Pre-Engagement considerations involve the process of gathering and assessing information prior to deploying the available personnel, tactics, equipment, and other appropriate and obtainable resources. Discretionary time, reactionary distance, communication, and barriers are key objectives to enhance the probability of a peaceful outcome. Self-regulation is a key component to the decision-making process.

**De-Escalation:** De-escalation is the use of strategies and/or techniques to gain voluntary compliance from an individual in order to gain or maintain control of an incident while reducing the need for physical coercion. These strategies and/or techniques are used to increase time and distance from the individual while attempting to establish effective communication.

**Disengagement (Tactical Withdraw):** Disengagement is a tactic designed to avoid potentially violent outcomes. Disengagement may be a viable option for individuals in crisis who pose no additional threats to others, or resistant offenders who may later be apprehended under safer conditions.

Anytime peace officers intend to disengage from an incident, they should attempt to advise involved individuals of the withdrawal from the incident. Peace officers should attempt to ensure those involved have had the opportunity to establish a position of relative safety with respect to the incident, and they are aware that officers will no longer be present to protect the safety of the involved persons.

# San Diego Countywide Crisis Management Philosophy

## Considerations for De-Escalation

**Special Relationship Considerations:** Under the law, peace officers have no duty to come to the aid of another unless the officers have created a peril or a special relationship exists. However, individual department policies may require an officer to take action under specific circumstances. A special relationship between law enforcement and a person may be created one of two ways. First, a special relationship may be created where the officer makes a representation, either express or implied, that is detrimentally relied upon and causes a foreseeable harm to another person. (For example, no warning was given after an officer promised to warn a person if a prisoner, who had threatened her life, was released and the prisoner murdered that individual.) Second, a special relationship may be created where the officer engages in an affirmative act that increases the foreseeable risk of harm to the individual. (For example, an officer investigating an accident directs an individual to follow him/her to the middle of the intersection. The individual complies, and the individual is hit by a car.) In other words, a special relationship has (1) an aspect of dependency, where one party relies to some degree on an officer for protection, and, (2) the officer has superior control over the means of protection.

Officers should consider special relationship concerns with respect to the handling of an incident, and subsequent decisions to disengage.

### TRAINING

Agencies should include the principles of this Philosophy and the crisis management considerations handout, in regular training evolutions.

Following any significant incident, field supervisors are encouraged to debrief and evaluate the event within the context of this Philosophy and its considerations. The objective of debriefs are for individual and agency development and may serve to augment the capacities of peace officers with the objective of protecting the lives and safety of all persons.