



NDTC

NATIONAL DE-ESCALATION TRAINING CENTER

Executive Council

Classification of De-escalation Training

OVERVIEW

There is often confusion regarding both the definition and constituent components of de-escalation training. For this reason, it is important to establish a categorization to aid in the identification of particular de-escalation programs and their associated elements. This classification system shall not be construed as a value judgment, nor should it be an endorsement for a particular class of de-escalation training. The evaluation of a particular class of training is based solely upon the general nature of the subject matter included within the class of training offered. Implicit within this categorization is the assumption that the training included therein is competent and not reflective of training offered by a particular agency or enterprise. Within the discussion below, training that has been popularly recognized as procedural justice, verbal judo, and emotional intelligence are occasionally referred to herein as traditional de-escalation methods.

Finally, crisis intervention training is broadly offered as a discipline to address interactions by law enforcement and other first responders with those suffering from mental issues and disabilities. The categorization discussed below concerns de-escalation training that may be inclusive of crisis intervention to some extent. It is not an attempt to categorize crisis intervention or crisis intervention training.

LEVEL 3

Individual personality traits that may influence behavior

LEVEL 2

Crisis intervention training programs

LEVEL 1

Procedural justice, emotional intelligence, & verbal judo

LEVEL 1 TRAINING

Description: Courses and training programs that are founded in traditional de-escalation methods such as procedural justice, emotional intelligence, and those espoused and published by Thompson (1993), and frequently referred to as verbal judo.

Rationale: Traditional de-escalation methods do not include consideration of possible personality traits, mental illness, or disabilities. Nor is emotional intelligence included although Thompson, in his text, briefly recommends empathy (p. 154). Verbal judo does however, closely parallel several primary components of procedural justice such as consideration, respect, fair treatment, explanation of officer actions, and listening to subjects. Traditional applications address individuals generally, based upon commonly accepted understandings of human expectations during law enforcement interactions. Studies regarding procedural justice have established its effectiveness in establishing the legitimacy of law enforcement, and as a consequence, a higher probability of peaceful compliance and cooperation.

LEVEL 2 TRAINING

Description: Courses and training that include fundamental elements of traditional de-escalation methods as well as some reasonable measure (at least an hour or a single module) specifically concerning of mental health and disabilities training. Included within Level 2 are specifically designated crisis intervention training programs for mentally impaired and disabled individuals provided the training also includes some measure of traditional de-escalation training.

Rationale: Crisis intervention is a critical area that officers face, often as the first individual on the scene. Force alternatives such as de-escalation and referral to professionals are essential to the effectiveness of the interaction to prevent unnecessary injury to the mentally impaired. For these reasons, crisis intervention training adds additional elements and considerations that are not present using traditional methods which seek merely to de-escalate otherwise healthy individuals.

LEVEL 3 TRAINING

Description: Courses that include traditional de-escalation training methods, crisis intervention training at the level expressed in Level 2, and training in individual personality traits that may influence behavior. No recognized personality model shall be excluded from this categorization (Myers-Briggs, DISC, Enneagram, etc.).

Rationale: Neither traditional de-escalation methods nor crisis training contemplate individual personality type within de-escalation training. As established decades ago through numerous studies beginning with Friedman and Rosenman (1974), there is a direct association between personality type and the propensity for possible aggression. The importance of personality has been highlighted via its use by law enforcement in criminal profiling, hostage negotiation, and intelligence-led policing. Training in personality identification and application represents a more comprehensive addition to de-escalation practices that can better direct interactions based upon the subject's individual needs, motivations, and behavioral patterns. The inclusion of personality presents distinctly different training considerations that are not present in Levels 1 and 2.

