



EXCELLENCE IN POLICING INITIATIVE

Use of Force Policy Core Principles

Attorney General Directive 2020-13 revises New Jersey's Use of Force Policy for law enforcement and now requires all 38,000 New Jersey law enforcement officers to adhere to the following seven principles:

1. The Sanctity of Human Life:

Officers must make every effort to preserve and protect human life and the safety of all persons; respect and uphold the dignity of all persons at all times; and never deploy force in a discriminatory manner.

2. De-Escalation & Force as a Last Resort:

Officers must focus on de-escalation techniques including use of verbal commands. Force must only be used as a last resort and only when necessary to accomplish lawful objectives, when other steps cannot achieve such objectives. Force shall never be used as a retaliatory or punitive measure.

3. Reasonable, Necessary, and Proportional Force:

In situations where officers are authorized to use force, they shall use the least amount of force that is reasonable, necessary, and proportional to safely achieve a lawful law enforcement objective.

4. Deadly Force as a Last Resort:

Even where force is authorized, deadly force shall only be used as an absolute last resort and in compliance with the strict conditions set forth in the new policy.

5. Duty to Intervene:

Every officer has an affirmative duty to take steps to prevent illegal or excessive uses of force by other officers and to immediately report any such incidents.

6. Duty to Render Medical Assistance:

After any use of force, officers shall promptly provide medical assistance to any injured person, and request emergency medical assistance if needed or requested. Officers must also monitor individuals for potential medical intervention after any officer uses force.

7. Duty to Report and Review Uses of Force:

Every use of force must be reported using the statewide Use of Force Portal, and all uses of force must undergo a meaningful command level review, including review by the law enforcement chief executive.

The new policy will be implemented through a massive retraining effort, pursuant to which every officer in the state will receive multiple days of interactive training, including scenario-based training that requires them to address many of the circumstances that most often lead to improper or excessive uses of force. The impact of the new policy will be monitored using a first-in-the-nation, statewide Use of Force Portal, which will include detailed data on every police use of force in the state, and a version of which will be available to the public in 2021.

