

# Use of Force

## 300.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines on the reasonable use of force. While there is no way to specify the exact amount or type of reasonable force to be applied in any situation, members authorized to use force are expected to use these guidelines to make such decisions in a professional, impartial, and reasonable manner that is in compliance with applicable laws and legal authorities (Government Code § 7286).

In addition to those methods, techniques, and tools set forth below, the guidelines for the reasonable application of force contained in this policy shall apply to all policies addressing the potential use of force, including but not limited to the Control Devices and Conducted Energy Devices policies.

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit members' lawful ability to defend themselves.

Retaliation prohibitions for reporting suspected violations is addressed in the Anti-Retaliation Policy.

### 300.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Deadly force** - Any use of force that creates a substantial risk of causing death or serious bodily injury, including but not limited to the discharge of a firearm (Penal Code § 835a).

**Feasible** - Reasonably capable of being done or carried out under the circumstances to successfully achieve the arrest or lawful objective without increasing risk to the officer or another person (Government Code § 7286(a)).

**Force** - The application of physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents, or weapons to another person. It is not a use of force when persons allow themselves to be searched, escorted, handcuffed, or restrained.

**Serious bodily injury** - A serious impairment of physical condition, including but not limited to the following: loss of consciousness; concussion; bone fracture; protracted loss or impairment of function of any bodily member or organ; a wound requiring extensive suturing; and serious disfigurement (Penal Code § 243(f)(4)).

**Totality of the circumstances** - All facts known to the officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of force (Penal Code § 835a).

## 300.2 POLICY

The use of force by officers authorized to use force is a matter of critical concern, both to the public and to the law enforcement community. Officers are involved on a daily basis in numerous and varied interactions and, when warranted, may use reasonable force in carrying out their duties.

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

Officers authorized to use force must have an understanding of, and true appreciation for, their authority and limitations. This is especially true with respect to overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of duties.

The Sonoma County Probation Department recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. Vesting officers with the authority to use reasonable force in the performance of their duties requires monitoring, evaluation, and a careful balancing of all interests.

#### **300.2.1 FAIR AND UNBIASED USE OF FORCE**

Officers are expected to carry out their duties, including the use of force, in a manner that is fair and unbiased (Government Code § 7286(b)).

#### **300.2.2 DUTY TO INTERCEDE**

Any officer present and observing another law enforcement officer or an employee using force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary, as determined by an objectively reasonable officer under the circumstances, shall, when in a position to do so, intercede (as defined by Government Code § 7286) to prevent the use of unreasonable force.

When observing force used by a law enforcement officer, each officer should take into account the totality of the circumstances and the possibility that other law enforcement officers may have additional information regarding the threat posed by the subject (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Intercession may be verbal and/or physical. The duty to intercede is not relieved by nor deferrable to other officers or supervisors at the scene. Supervisors who observe force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary as determined by the reasonable officer standard should issue a verbal command to the officer and take appropriate action to cause the unnecessary or excessive force to immediately cease.

#### **300.2.3 DUTY TO REPORT EXCESSIVE FORCE**

Any officer who observes a law enforcement officer or an employee use force that potentially exceeds what the officer reasonably believes to be necessary shall immediately report these observations to a supervisor (Government Code § 7286(b); Penal Code § 832.13).

#### **300.2.4 FAILURE TO INTERCEDE**

An officer who has received the required training on the duty to intercede and then fails to act to intercede when required by law may be disciplined in the same manner as the officer who used force beyond that which is necessary (Government Code § 7286(b)).

### **300.3 USE OF FORCE**

Officers authorized by the Chief Probation Officer to use force in arresting an individual or preventing an individual from escaping custody shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose (Penal Code § 835a).

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any evaluation of reasonableness must allow for the fact that officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary in a particular situation with limited information and in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving.

Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might encounter, officers are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate use of force in each incident. Officers may only use a level of force that they reasonably believe is proportional to the seriousness of the suspected offense or the reasonably perceived level of actual or threatened resistance (Government Code § 7286(b)).

It is also recognized that circumstances may arise in which officers reasonably believe that it would be impractical or ineffective to use any of the approved or authorized tools, weapons, or methods provided by the Department. Officers may find it more effective or reasonable to improvise their response to rapidly unfolding conditions that they are confronting. In such circumstances, the use of any improvised device or method must nonetheless be objectively reasonable and utilized only to the degree that reasonably appears necessary to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

While the ultimate objective of every encounter is to avoid or minimize injury, nothing in this policy requires an officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force.

#### 300.3.1 ALTERNATIVE TACTICS - DE-ESCALATION

As time and circumstances reasonably permit, and when community and officer safety would not be compromised, officers should consider actions that may increase officer safety and may decrease the need for using force:

- (a) Summoning additional resources that are able to respond in a reasonably timely manner.
- (b) Formulating a plan with responding officers before entering an unstable situation that does not reasonably appear to require immediate intervention.
- (c) Employing other tactics that do not unreasonably increase officer jeopardy.

In addition, when reasonable, officers should evaluate the totality of circumstances presented at the time in each situation and, when feasible, consider and utilize reasonably available alternative tactics and techniques that may persuade an individual to voluntarily comply or may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation before applying force (Government Code § 7286(b)). Such alternatives may include but are not limited to:

- Attempts to de-escalate a situation.
- If reasonably available, the use of crisis intervention techniques by properly trained personnel.

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

#### 300.3.2 USE OF FORCE TO EFFECT AN ARREST

Officers authorized by the Chief Probation Officer and California Penal Code § 830.5 may use objectively reasonable force to effect an arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance (Penal Code § 835).

An authorized officer who makes or attempts to make an arrest need not retreat or desist from the efforts by reason of resistance or threatened resistance on the part of the person being arrested; nor shall an officer be deemed the aggressor or lose the right to self-defense by the use of reasonable force to effect the arrest, prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. Retreat does not mean tactical repositioning or other de-escalation techniques (Penal Code § 835a).

#### 300.3.3 FACTORS USED TO DETERMINE THE REASONABLENESS OF FORCE

When determining whether to apply force and evaluating whether an officer has used reasonable force, a number of factors should be taken into consideration, as time and circumstances permit (Government Code § 7286(b)). These factors include but are not limited to:

- (a) The apparent immediacy and severity of the threat to officers or others (Penal Code § 835a).
- (b) The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time (Penal Code § 835a).
- (c) Officer/subject factors (e.g., age, size, relative strength, skill level, injuries sustained, level of exhaustion or fatigue, the number of officers available vs. subjects).
- (d) The conduct of the involved officer leading up to the use of force (Penal Code § 835a).
- (e) The effects of suspected drugs or alcohol.
- (f) The individual's apparent mental state or capacity (Penal Code § 835a).
- (g) The individual's apparent ability to understand and comply with officer commands (Penal Code § 835a).
- (h) Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices.
- (i) The degree to which the individual has been effectively restrained and the individual's ability to resist despite being restrained.
- (j) The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness (Penal Code § 835a).
- (k) Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual prior to and at the time force is used.
- (l) Training and experience of the officer.
- (m) Potential for injury to officers, suspects, bystanders, and others.
- (n) Whether the individual appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight, or is attacking the officer.
- (o) The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape.

## *Use of Force*

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- (p) The apparent need for immediate control of the individual or a prompt resolution of the situation.
- (q) Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the officer or others.
- (r) Prior contacts with the individual or awareness of any propensity for violence.
- (s) Any other exigent circumstances.

### 300.3.4 PAIN COMPLIANCE TECHNIQUES

Pain compliance techniques may be effective in controlling a physically or actively resisting individual. Officers may only apply those pain compliance techniques for which they have successfully completed department-approved training. Officers utilizing any pain compliance technique should consider:

- (a) The degree to which the application of the technique may be controlled given the level of resistance.
- (b) Whether the individual can comply with the direction or orders of the officer.
- (c) Whether the individual has been given sufficient opportunity to comply.

The application of any pain compliance technique shall be discontinued once the officer determines that compliance has been achieved.

### 300.3.5 RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CAROTID CONTROL HOLD

Officers of this Department are not authorized to use a carotid restraint hold. A carotid restraint means a vascular neck restraint or any similar restraint, hold, or other defensive tactic in which pressure is applied to the sides of a person's neck that involves a substantial risk of restricting blood flow and may render the person unconscious in order to subdue or control the person (Government Code § 7286.5).

### 300.3.6 RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF A CHOKE HOLD

Officers of this Department are not authorized to use a choke hold. A choke hold means any defensive tactic or force option in which direct pressure is applied to a person's trachea or windpipe (Government Code § 7286.5).

### 300.3.7 IMPROPER USES OF FORCE

Force should never be used as a method of punishment or retaliation, or to humiliate anyone. Examples of force that are expressly prohibited include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Hogtying (affixing of hands and feet together behind the back).

The use of restraint devices to attach an individual to a wall, floor or other fixture, including a restraint chair, is strictly prohibited if the individual is under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court, excluding a hospital gurney under temporary exigent circumstances if deemed necessary and requested by hospital staff, and only if also deemed by Probation Staff to be necessary in order to prevent the individual from inflicting self-injury or injury to others, and no other form of restraint

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

or other measures have been or would be effective. In such situations, when safe to do so, a supervisor, or if none available, then a Division Director, must be immediately contacted.

Restraints shall be removed upon the request of hospital staff or if instructed to do so by a supervisor or Division Director after further assessment and upon additional information being presented. Probation staff shall continuously monitor and reassess the situation.

For all other individuals, only under limited, temporary exigent circumstances may an individual be attached to a fixture using restraint devices, for example, if instructed to do so by medical personnel at a hospital. In such instances, immediately notify a supervisor and document in an incident report.

#### **300.3.8 USE OF FORCE TO SEIZE EVIDENCE**

In general, authorized officers may use reasonable force to lawfully seize evidence and to prevent the destruction of evidence.

In the instance when force is used to seize evidence, officers should not intentionally use any technique that restricts blood flow to the head, restricts respiration, or which creates a reasonable likelihood that blood flow to the head or respiration would be restricted.

#### **300.3.9 USE OF FORCE TO PREVENT INGESTION OF EVIDENCE**

Officers are discouraged from using force solely to prevent a person from swallowing evidence or contraband.

#### **300.3.10 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

Terms such as “positional asphyxia,” “restraint asphyxia,” and “excited delirium” continue to remain the subject of debate among experts and medical professionals, are not universally recognized medical conditions, and frequently involve other collateral or controlling factors such as narcotics or alcohol influence, or preexisting medical conditions. While it is impractical to restrict an officer’s use of reasonable control methods when attempting to restrain a combative individual, officers are not authorized to use any restraint or transportation method which might unreasonably impair an individual’s breathing or respiratory capacity for a period beyond the point when the individual has been adequately and safely controlled. Once controlled, the individual should be placed into a recovery position (e.g., supine or seated) and monitored for signs of medical distress (Government Code § 7286.5).

### **300.4 DEADLY FORCE APPLICATIONS**

Where feasible, the officer shall, prior to the use of deadly force, make reasonable efforts to identify as a peace officer and to warn that deadly force may be used, unless the officer has objectively reasonable grounds to believe the person is aware of those facts (Penal Code 835a).

If an objectively reasonable officer would consider it safe and feasible to do so under the totality of the circumstances, officers shall evaluate and use other reasonably available resources and techniques when determining whether to use deadly force. To the extent that it is reasonably

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

practical, officers should consider their surroundings and any potential risks to bystanders prior to discharging a firearm (Government Code § 7286(b)).

The use of deadly force by authorized members is only justified when the officer reasonably believes it is necessary in the following circumstances (Penal Code § 835a):

- (a) Officers may use deadly force to protect themselves or others from what they reasonably believe is an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person.
- (b) An officer may use deadly force to apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended.

Officers shall not use deadly force against a person based on the danger that person poses to self, if an objectively reasonable officer would believe the person does not pose an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person (Penal Code § 835a).

An “imminent” threat of death or serious bodily injury exists when, based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe that a person has the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the officer or another person. An officer’s subjective fear of future harm alone is insufficient as an imminent threat. An imminent threat is one that from appearances is reasonably believed to require instant attention (Penal Code § 835a).

#### 300.4.1 SHOOTING AT OR FROM MOVING VEHICLES

Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle are rarely effective and may involve additional considerations and risks. When feasible, officers should take reasonable steps to move out of the path of an approaching vehicle instead of discharging their firearm at the vehicle or any of its occupants. An officer should only discharge a firearm at a moving vehicle or its occupants when the officer reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the imminent threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Officers should not shoot at any part of a vehicle in an attempt to disable the vehicle.

#### 300.4.2 DISPLAYING OF FIREARMS

Given that individuals might perceive the display of a firearm as a potential application of force, officers should carefully evaluate each tactical situation and use sound discretion when drawing a firearm in public by considering the following guidelines (Government Code § 7286(b)):

- (a) If the officer does not initially perceive a threat but reasonably believes that the potential for such threat exists, firearms should generally be kept in the low-ready or other position not directed toward an individual.
- (b) If the officer reasonably believes that a threat exists based on the totality of circumstances presented at the time (e.g., high-risk stop, tactical entry, armed

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

encounter), firearms may be directed toward such threat until the officer no longer perceives such threat.

Once it is reasonably safe to do so, officers should carefully secure all firearms.

#### **300.5 REPORTING THE USE OF FORCE**

Any use of force by a member of this department shall be documented promptly, completely, and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The officer should articulate the factors perceived and why the officer believed the use of force was reasonable under the circumstances. To collect data for purposes of training, resource allocation, analysis, and related purposes, the Department may require the completion of additional report forms as specified in department policy, procedure, or law. See the Report Preparation Policy for additional circumstances that may require documentation.

##### **300.5.1 NOTIFICATION TO SUPERVISORS**

Any use of force by an officer shall be reported immediately to a supervisor in circumstances including but not limited to the following (Penal Code § 832.13):

- (a) The application caused a visible injury.
- (b) The application would lead a reasonable officer to conclude that the individual may have experienced more than momentary discomfort.
- (c) The individual subjected to the force complained of injury or continuing pain.
- (d) The individual indicates intent to pursue litigation.
- (e) Any application of OC spray, baton or improvised impact device.
- (f) Any application of a restraint device other than handcuffs, shackles, or belly chains.
- (g) The individual subjected to the force was rendered unconscious.
- (h) An individual was struck or kicked.
- (i) An individual alleges unreasonable force was used or that any of the above has occurred.
- (j) All incidents where a firearm is intentionally pointed at a person to gain compliance. This does not include the drawing of a firearm and maintaining it at the low ready, routine clearing of a home, or safe direction away from the person contacted.

As used in this section, "immediately" means as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so.

##### **300.5.2 REPORTING TO CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

Statistical data regarding all officer-involved shootings and incidents involving use of force resulting in serious bodily injury is to be reported to the California Department of Justice as required by Government Code § 12525.2 (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy).



## *Use of Force*

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### **300.6 MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Once it is reasonably safe to do so, properly trained officers should promptly provide or procure medical assistance for any person injured or claiming to have been injured in a use of force incident (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Prior to booking or release, medical assistance shall be obtained for any person who exhibits signs of physical distress, who has sustained visible injury, expresses a complaint of injury or continuing pain, or who was rendered unconscious. Any individual exhibiting signs of physical distress after an encounter should be continuously monitored until medically assessed.

Based upon the officer's initial assessment of the nature and extent of the individual's injuries, medical assistance may consist of examination by an emergency medical services provider or medical personnel at a hospital or jail. If any such individual refuses medical attention, such a refusal shall be fully documented in related reports and, whenever practicable, should be witnessed by another officer and/or medical personnel. If a recording is made of the contact or an interview with the individual, any refusal should be included in the recording, if possible.

The on-scene supervisor or, if the on-scene supervisor is not available, the primary handling officer shall ensure that any person providing medical care or receiving custody of a person following any use of force is informed that the person was subjected to force. This notification shall include a description of the force used and any other circumstances the officer reasonably believes would be potential safety or medical risks to the subject (e.g., prolonged struggle, extreme agitation, impaired respiration).

Individuals who exhibit extreme agitation, violent irrational behavior accompanied by profuse sweating, extraordinary strength beyond their physical characteristics, and imperviousness to pain (sometimes called "excited delirium"), or who require a protracted physical encounter with multiple officers to be brought under control, may be at an increased risk of sudden death. Calls involving these persons should be considered medical emergencies. Officers who reasonably suspect a medical emergency should request medical assistance as soon as practicable and have medical personnel stage away.

### **300.7 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY**

A supervisor should respond to any reported use of force, if reasonably available. The responding supervisor is expected to (Government Code § 7286(b)):

- (a) Obtain the basic facts from the involved officers.
- (b) Ensure that any injured parties are examined and treated.
- (c) Once any initial medical assessment has been completed or first aid has been rendered, ensure that photographs have been taken of any areas involving visible injury or complaint of pain, as well as overall photographs of uninjured areas.
  - 1. These photographs should be retained until all potential for civil litigation has expired.
- (d) Identify any witnesses not already included in related reports.

# Sonoma County Probation Department

## Probation Manual

### *Use of Force*

---

- (e) Review and approve all related reports.

In the event that a supervisor is unable to respond to the scene of an incident involving the reported application of force, the supervisor is still expected to complete as many of the above items as circumstances permit.

#### **300.7.1 DIVISION DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITY**

The Division Director shall review each use of force by any personnel within the Division Director's command to ensure compliance with this policy. Upon receiving notification of a use of force that meets the above criteria, the Division Director shall:

- (a) Review the report of the officer involved in the incident.
- (b) Review the report(s) of additional involved officers.
- (c) Review the supervisor's report for findings.

If any policy violations are identified, the matter should be referred to the Deputy Chief Probation Officer or Chief Probation Officer for further investigation.

#### **300.8 USE OF FORCE COMPLAINTS**

The receipt, processing, and investigation of civilian complaints involving use of force incidents should be handled in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy (Government Code § 7286(b)).

#### **300.9 TRAINING**

Officers and supervisors will receive periodic training on this policy and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding (Government Code § 7286(b)).

Subject to available resources, the Training Manager should ensure that officers receive periodic training on de-escalation tactics, including alternatives to force.

Training should also include (Government Code § 7286(b)):

- (a) Guidelines regarding vulnerable populations, including but not limited to children, elderly persons, pregnant individuals, and individuals with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities.
- (b) Training courses required by and consistent with POST guidelines set forth in Penal Code § 13519.10.

#### **300.10 USE OF FORCE ANALYSIS**

At least annually, the Chief Probation Officer's sworn authorized designee should prepare an analysis report on use of force incidents. The report should be submitted to the Chief Probation Officer or the sworn authorized designee. The report should not contain the names of officers, suspects, or case numbers, and should include:

- (a) The identification of any trends in the use of force by members.

## *Use of Force*

---

- (b) Training needs recommendations.
- (c) Equipment needs recommendations.
- (d) Policy revision recommendations.

### **300.11 POLICY REVIEW**

The Chief Probation Officer or the authorized designee should regularly review and update this policy to reflect developing practices and procedures (Government Code § 7286(b)).

### **300.12 POLICY AVAILABILITY**

The Chief Probation Officer or the authorized designee should ensure this policy is accessible to the public (Government Code § 7286(c)).

### **300.13 PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS**

Requests for public records involving an officer's personnel records shall be processed in accordance with Penal Code § 832.7 and the Personnel Records, and Records Maintenance and Release policies (Government Code § 7286(b)).