

Niskanen Center

REASSESSING POLICE DE-ESCALATION TRAINING

Evidence, gaps, and policy priorities

ROBIN S. ENGEL, PhD

JENNIFER CHERKAUSKAS, PhD

March, 2026



N

The Niskanen Center is a 501(c)3 issue advocacy organization that works to change public policy through direct engagement in the policymaking process.

NISKANEN CENTER | 1201 New York Ave NW | WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

www.niskanencenter.org | For inquiries, please contact ltavlas@niskanencenter.org

Overview

In recent years, de-escalation training has become a key approach in law enforcement, providing officers with tactics, skills, and tools to better manage interactions with the public. This focus reflects growing community and law enforcement interest in resolving conflicts and handling challenging, often emotionally charged interactions with members of the public more effectively than in the past, particularly when encountering individuals in crisis. Proponents of de-escalation training argue that it equips officers with enhanced skills to resolve conflicts in highly confrontational situations without the use of force or less severe force (Oliva et al., 2010). Others, however, have raised concerns about the use of de-escalation tactics, suggesting that the training increases officers' risk of injury by encouraging slower and less effective responses to potentially volatile situations than the operational responses of traditional policing (Blake, 2017; Jackman, 2016a; Zaiser et al., 2023).

Despite widespread calls for police de-escalation training after the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the renewed demands that followed the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, there was still little evidence that this training was effective. A multidisciplinary systematic review in 2020 identified 64 evaluations of de-escalation training across professions, primarily in nursing and psychiatry, yet the review found no evaluations involving law enforcement or other criminal justice practitioners (Engel et al., 2020a). In short, nothing was known systematically about the effectiveness of police de-escalation training. Only in the past five years have de-escalation training evaluations begun to accumulate, building a foundation for what is known about training efficacy and effectiveness.

Most recently, debates over policing practices and training have increasingly mirrored broader political divisions about how public safety should be delivered and achieved. Some stakeholders favor more assertive, enforcement-oriented tactics, viewing them as necessary to deter crime, respond to public concern about disorder, and support officer authority. Others promote approaches designed to defuse encounters, such as de-escalation and crisis intervention, arguing that these strategies can reduce the likelihood of force, improve safety outcomes for both subjects and officers, and strengthen community trust. These differing perspectives shape legislative priorities, funding decisions, and agency-level guidance, creating variability in how policing policies and training programs are adopted and implemented across jurisdictions. As a result, policymakers face growing pressure to balance demands for immediate crime control with longer-term goals related to police accountability, legitimacy, and risk reduction.

In the post-2020 policing landscape, a multifaceted picture is emerging regarding law enforcement agencies' attempts to institutionalize de-escalation training and practices in their daily operations, and the limited evidence available to support these efforts. We begin this policy brief by describing the lack of clarity regarding what the term "de-escalation" means in policing and reviewing the similarities and differences in the definition across professional law enforcement organizations, federal agencies, and researchers. Next, we consider the evolution of agency use of force policies and highlight the growing integration of de-escalation into formal policy. We then turn to a discussion of the federal investments and other funding available to expand and evaluate de-escalation training. Thereafter, we provide an updated review of the available evaluation research on de-escalation training in which we highlight what is known, what remains uncertain, and which training programs show evidence of impact. Finally, we consider the implications for future research, along with a discussion of the implications and call to action for law enforcement practitioners. We conclude with practical policy priorities for strengthening de-escalation training, improving training evaluations, and building the institutional foundation needed to support safer police-public encounters.

Defining and measuring de-escalation

We begin by clarifying what is meant by the term “police de-escalation.” In fields such as nursing and psychiatry, de-escalation is commonly understood as a set of strategies used to prevent, reduce, or manage aggressive behavior during interactions between individuals (Engel et al., 2020a). In contrast, within the policing field, the term lacks a consistent, evidence-based definition. As a result, there is no clear consensus on what constitutes police de-escalation or what effective de-escalation tactics or training should entail (Anderson et al., 2024; Davies & Dawson, 2025; Engel et al., 2020a; Todak & James, 2018; Zaiser et al., 2023).

This definitional ambiguity contributes to variation across practitioners, agencies, training programs, and research studies in how de-escalation is conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated. To highlight both common themes and key differences, Table 1 summarizes a range of definitions and conceptualizations of police de-escalation drawn from federal legislation and professional organizations, along with a sample from various researchers and practitioners.

Table 1. Summary of De-escalation Definitions (listed alphabetically by source)

Source (Year)	Source Type	Definition of De-escalation
Anderson, Seacrest, Smith, & Snider (2024, p.4)	Policy paper	“De-escalation involves words and actions intended to reduce tension, avoid a physical confrontation, and reduce the risk of injury to police officers and the public.”
Davies & Dawson (2025, p.34)	Scholarly article	“The goal of resolving police-citizen encounters using situationally appropriate skills, tactics, strategies, and techniques, including verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and, when required, reasonable and necessary physical force option(s) that will reduce the potential for injury/harm while prioritizing the safety of the victim(s), the public, the officer(s), and, when possible, the subject(s).”
Department of Homeland Security (2023, p.12)	Policy Statement 044-05	“The use of communication or other techniques during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation without using physical force, or with a reduction in force.”
Engel, McManus & Herold (2020a, p.724)	Scholarly article	“Based on a larger review of literature across disciplines, de-escalation is found to refer to a process or tactics used to prevent, reduce, or manage behaviors associated with conflict, including verbal or physical agitation, aggression, violence, or similar behaviors, during an interaction between two or more individuals.”
IACP National Consensus Policy on Use of Force (2020, p.2)	Policy paper	“Taking action or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary. De-escalation may include the use of such techniques as command presence, advisements, warnings, verbal persuasion, and tactical repositioning.”
Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act (LEDTA) (2022, p.4441)	Federal Legislation	“Taking action or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary.”
Lexipol (2025, p.4)	Policy paper	“When circumstances reasonably permit, officers should use non-violent strategies and techniques to decrease the intensity of a situation, improve decision-making, improve communication, reduce the need for force, and increase voluntary compliance (e.g., summoning additional resources, formulating a plan, attempting verbal persuasion).”

Police Executive Research Forum (2016, p.40)	Monograph	PERF’s 30 Guiding Principles on Use of Force recommended adoption de-escalation as formal agency policy and noted “De-escalation policy should also include discussion of proportionality, using distance and cover, tactical repositioning, “slowing down” situations that do not pose an immediate threat, calling for supervisory and other resources, etc.”
Todak & White (2019, p. 837)	Scholarly article	Officers defined de-escalation as “Bringing a situation or citizen in crisis back to a calm state, using the least amount of force possible.” Focuses on core tactics like humanity, listening, compromise, honesty, and empowerment.
van Lith, Hutter, Sexton, Vandeviver, Schoonmade, & Lindegaard (2025, p.632)	Scholarly article	“De-escalation by officers encompasses an interactional process resulting from conflicting goals, desires, or needs between an officer and citizen, by which the officer aims to influence the emotions and behavior of the citizen to resolve conflict and reduce tension, ensure the citizen is calm, cooperative, and does not show escalated behavior while using the lowest level of force necessary to maintain officer and citizen safety.”
White et al. (2025, p.53)	Scholarly article	Tempe PD definition of de-escalation: “Techniques used to gain compliance with the goal of reducing violence or aggression. This can be accomplished through application of the PATROL model (Planning, Assessment, Time, Redeploy, Other Resources, and Lines of Communication), communication, the use of appropriate force, and/or other reasonable techniques.”
Zaiser, Staller, & Koerner (2023, p.197)	Scholarly book chapter	“We understand de-escalation to be any conduct practiced by police with the goal of preventing escalation.”

Despite differences in how police de-escalation is defined, these approaches share several core principles. In general, most uses of the term “de-escalation” are based on underlying assumptions that police responses in fraught interactions can be improved and risks reduced by: 1) grounding approaches in the core police mission of the protection of human life; 2) requiring officers to draw on their training, experience, judgment, and available tools and resources to defuse situations; and 3) resolving incidents using the least amount of force necessary to achieve a lawful objective.

One key difference across definitions of de-escalation is that the concept is framed in two related but distinct ways. First, de-escalation is defined in terms of goals or outcomes, specifically the peaceful resolution of police-subject encounters. Second, it is defined in terms of tactics, skills, or techniques, referring to the actions officers should use to achieve these outcomes. Differences across definitions often stem from whether de-escalation is conceptualized as an outcome, a set of techniques, or both. In recognition of this variation, some recent agency use of force policies define de-escalation as encompassing both outcomes and methods (e.g., see Austin, Texas, Police Department *General Orders 200: Use of Force*, and Louisville, Kentucky, Metro Police Department *Standard Operating Procedures 9.1 Use of Force*).

Across sources, the core de-escalation tactics and skills identified as instrumental in achieving desired outcomes during police-subject interactions include: communication (verbal and nonverbal); active listening; maintaining officer safety through the tactical use of time, distance, and cover; demonstrating patience, empathy, and a willingness to compromise; and using additional resources if available. MacIsaac et al. (2024) offer that *relational techniques* (e.g., effective communication, rapport building, empathy, and active listening) can be distinguished from *tactical techniques* (e.g., maintaining self-control, preplanning, and using less lethal options), and suggest that these two types of techniques have different outcome goals. Relational techniques are used to establish a meaningful relationship with the subject to return the individual to a calm state, while tactical techniques are used to resolve the situation quickly while minimizing risk.

It is also important to note that several de-escalation training programs do not explicitly define — or even use — the term “de-escalation” in their curricula. Instead, these trainings avoid the term altogether, opting for language such as “conflict resolution,” “improving officer decision-making,” and “responding to individuals in crisis,” as well as approaches aimed at reducing stressful or emotionally charged situations (e.g., Dube et al., 2025; PERF, n.d.). This approach may reflect ongoing concerns about the term “de-escalation,” which some practitioners continue to associate with hesitation or retreat, and perceptions that such training could increase the risks to officer or public safety. These concerns were prevalent when de-escalation tactics, policies, and training were first introduced in the mid-2010s as part of broader reform efforts to address racial and ethnic disparities and reduce police use of force. They remain prevalent for the same reasons but in a context in which violent altercations with police are increasingly politicized.

Measuring how often and in what ways officers use de-escalation tactics in the field is also challenging given the wide variation in definitions, making comparisons across and even within agencies exceedingly difficult. One rare example of empirical data comes from a study of more than 1,300 use of force reports by the Oklahoma City Police Department, which found that supervisors reported some form of de-escalation used in nearly 90 percent of their officers’ use of force incidents (Engel et al., 2025c). This suggests de-escalation is deeply embedded in OKCPD’s operational practices. The study also showed that certain tactics, such as communicating from a safe position and containing the subject, are commonly used, while others, including disengagement and repositioning, are used infrequently and are typically viewed as inappropriate for the situation. These findings reinforce a critical point: De-escalation is not a one-size-fits-all solution (Davies & Dawson, 2025). Rather, it is a set of tools to help manage volatile situations. Nor does it guarantee that force is unnecessary. Understanding both the potential and limitations of de-escalation in real-world policing is essential to improving safety for officers and the public.

Agency use of force policies

Since the late 1970s, research has consistently demonstrated that changes in use of force policies can significantly impact police behavior, most notably in reducing both fatal and nonfatal uses of force (Fyfe, 1979, 1982). Reviewing research available through the early 1990s, scholars concluded that the implementation of restrictive police use of force policies was generally associated with substantial reductions in police shootings, a higher likelihood that shootings occurred in response to serious criminal threats, and no decline in officer safety. Importantly, these policy changes showed no evidence that they increased crime rates or reduced enforcement intensity (Geller & Scott, 1992).

Research over the past quarter century confirms that police agencies with higher thresholds for using more severe types of force have lower rates of lethal and less-lethal force, including conductive energy devices (i.e., TASERs) and OC spray (Bishopp et al., 2015; Morabito & Doerner, 1997). Likewise, agencies with policies that require officers to document when they unholster, point, or display their firearms have fewer officer-involved shooting incidents (Jennings & Rubado, 2017; Shjarback et al., 2021). Collectively, the evidence is clear that more restrictive use of force policies are highly correlated with reductions in the frequency and severity of police use of force. Despite this evidence, police agencies continue to vary dramatically in the content and judiciousness of their use of force policies (Smith, 2022).

Ten years ago, the Police Executive Research Forum issued its *Guiding Principles on Use of Force* in response to a series of high-profile and controversial instances in which police used deadly force (PERF, 2016; PERF, 2026). Incorporating the insights of leading police executives from across the country, the report reflected the evolution

in thinking about use of force practices. The report’s “30 Guiding Principles” called for comprehensive changes to use of force policies, training, tactics, and equipment, aimed at giving officers more effective tools to manage complex encounters and elevating professional standards for when and how to apply force. Thirteen of the 30 principles focused on policy reforms, including affirming the sanctity of human life, incorporating de-escalation as a core agency directive, establishing a duty for officers to intervene when other officers may be using excessive force, prohibiting firing weapons at moving vehicles, and strengthening documentation and reporting requirements.

Although many of PERF’s recommendations align with contemporary calls for law enforcement reform, the report was initially met with skepticism – and in some cases opposition – by law enforcement organizations (Jackman, 2016b). Concerned about the limited empirical research supporting certain policy recommendations, critics argued that the principles insufficiently accounted for officer safety in high-risk operational environments (Davis, 2016; Fairburn, 2016). At the same time, supporters emphasized the importance of the principles as a framework for strengthening police–community relations, enhancing public trust and perceptions of police legitimacy, and improving safety outcomes for both members of the public and officers (Jackman, 2016b).

To provide additional clarification and direction to the law enforcement field, in 2016 the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), in partnership with the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), convened executive leadership from 18 national law enforcement organizations in to discuss use of force policy and practice.¹ As a result of these discussions, 11 national law enforcement organizations endorsed the *National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force*, which offers agencies guidance on policy language, operational practices, and professional standards (Dziejma & De Sousa, 2017). The model policy was subsequently updated in 2020 to provide additional clarification regarding the use of neck restraints (IACP, 2017, 2020).

In the years following the release of the *30 Guiding Principles on Use of Force* and the *National Consensus Policy*, law enforcement agencies nationwide adjusted their use of force policies and related practices. The momentum for policy changes accelerated after widespread civil unrest in 2020. In the years since, agencies have emphasized four policy updates and changes in particular: 1) establishing a police duty to intervene and mandatory reporting requirements in cases of excessive force; 2) restricting or prohibiting chokeholds and other neck restraints; 3) requiring officers to provide medical assistance following the use of force; and 4) mandating the use of de-escalation tactics when feasible during potentially volatile encounters. Although empirical evidence on the effects of these reforms remains limited, proponents say they improve safety outcomes for both officers and the individuals whom they encounter (CCJ, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d).

With respect to requiring de-escalation, the *30 Principles* recommend law enforcement agencies formally adopt de-escalation as agency policy, including through general orders or policy statements that clearly establish de-escalation as the preferred response in many critical incidents (PERF, 2016). The *National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force* also endorses integrating de-escalation into use of force policies. The paper recommends that “procedurally, whenever possible and appropriate, officers should utilize de-escalation techniques consistent with their training before resorting to force or to reduce the need for force” and that

when verbal commands are issued, the individual should be provided with a reasonable amount of time and opportunity to respond before force is used, with the understanding that such a pause should not

1. Two in-person meetings, moderated by the author (Engel), were convened in 2016 at IACP headquarters in Alexandria, VA, and at IACP’s Annual Conference in San Diego, CA.

compromise the safety of the officer or another and will not result in the destruction of evidence, escape of a suspect, or commission of a crime (IACP, 2020, p.12).

Consistent with these approaches, the Council on Criminal Justice (CCJ) has emphasized that de-escalation training and practices must be grounded in clear, written policy and reinforced through supervisory oversight and accountability mechanisms (CCJ, 2021a).

Overall, the incorporation of de-escalation into use of force policies appears to have become increasingly common among law enforcement agencies. By 2021, 77 of the 100 largest cities in the United States had use of force policies requiring officers to use de-escalation tactics when possible, and as of 2024, at least 18 states require law enforcement officers to be trained in de-escalation tactics (8cantwait, 2024; Anderson et al., 2024; NCSL, 2024). Empirical research assessing the extent of de-escalation policy adoption, the specific content of those policies, and their operational effects on day-to-day policing remains limited, and use of force policies continue to vary substantially across jurisdictions. Nevertheless, they represent a significant mechanism for constraining officer discretion and promoting safer interactions with the public (Bishopp et al., 2015; Ferdik et al., 2014; Jennings & Rubado, 2017; Shjarback et al., 2021; Terrill, & Paoline, 2017).

State and federal legislation and investments in police de-escalation training

By the late 2010s and early 2020s, federal investment had accelerated the proliferation of de-escalation training nationally. Based on repeated requests for technical assistance and training from the field, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funded the development of a new de-escalation training curriculum – “Applied De-escalation Tactics” – to be added to the suite of training and technical assistance offered to law enforcement agencies through the Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC, n.d.).² Specifically, the Law Enforcement Innovation Center (LEIC) was commissioned to develop a train-the-trainer de-escalation curriculum to be offered at no cost to agencies applying for technical assistance and training through CRI-TAC. The Applied De-escalation Tactics program was designed as a two day, 16-hour block of instruction with curriculum content for classroom instruction, facilitated discussion, group exercises, role-play scenarios, and simulator-based practice. The intent was to build internal instructional capacity by preparing trainers from municipal law enforcement agencies to adopt the curriculum and implement de-escalation training within their departments (Isaza et al., 2024). However, an independent evaluation of the impact of Applied De-escalation Tactics training found that none of the initial municipal trainers who attended the train-the-trainer program moved forward with full delivery of the training in their agencies (Isaza et al., 2024).

Following the limited impact of this initial federal investment in de-escalation training, the COPS Office attempted a different approach, creating and maintaining a National De-escalation Training Center Network (NDTC) to offer training and resources to law enforcement agencies at no cost to agencies. In 2021, the COPS Office assigned the Center for Public Safety Innovation at St. Petersburg College in Florida as the coordinator for the National De-escalation Training Center Network, in partnership with Fort Hays State University in Kansas and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to meet the increasing demand for de-escalation training among law enforcement. Through

2. CRI-TAC is a federally funded national law enforcement technical assistance program administered by IACP and partner organizations for state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies to improve public safety, reduce crime, enhance organizational effectiveness, and improve community policing strategies (COPS, n.d.).

this funding, multiple training-delivery methods have been offered, including in-person classes, live virtual sessions, and online courses. An initial internal assessment of this federal investment reported that NDTC training significantly improved officers' self-reported ability to recognize escalating behavior, adapt responses to different personality types, and de-escalate training scenarios effectively (Steele et al., 2025). However, no assessments of changes in officer behavior in the field have been reported.

In addition to the initial federal investments described above, on December 27, 2022, the bipartisan *Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act* (Public Law No: 117-325) was enacted with “unanimous consent in the Senate and wide support in the House” (Anderson et al., 2024; LEDTA, 2022). LEDTA was designed to improve public safety by enhancing how law enforcement officers and mental health professionals respond to volatile situations, specifically directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop or select scenario-based training curricula and provide grants to states to support training for law enforcement and mental health personnel. In 2024, the DOJ awarded more than \$15 million in LEDTA-enabled funding to 42 grantees to promote de-escalation and crisis response training through the COPS Office's Safer Outcomes: De-Escalation and Crisis Response Training for Law Enforcement grant program (COPS Office, 2024). In 2025, it awarded nearly \$16 million more to local and state law enforcement agencies from two funding opportunities under the Safer Outcomes program (COPS Office, 2025a).

Also pursuant to LEDTA, in 2024 and 2025, COPS awarded approximately \$2 million to the National Policing Institute to establish national standards for approving de-escalation training curricula; develop processes to review, approve, and monitor training programs; create and maintain an online platform for curriculum submission and review; and produce a publicly accessible catalog of approved de-escalation training programs (COPS Office, 2025b; NPI, n.d.). However, given the minimal state of the evidence base, these objectives rest on assumptions unsupported by research. As White et al. (2021a, p. 728) note, “we know virtually nothing about de-escalation in policing, including what it is, what it includes (and does not), and whether it works (or what it means to ‘work’).” Critically, research conducted since the passage of LEDTA has failed to meaningfully resolve these foundational uncertainties. There remains no consensus definition of de-escalation, limited evidence linking training to behavioral outcomes in the field, and little empirical guidance on what constitutes an effective de-escalation curriculum (Anderson et al., 2024). Given this context, efforts to impose national standards, approval mechanisms, and review processes are not merely premature, but risk formalizing poorly defined concepts and unproven practices. Absent a stronger empirical foundation, this federal investment prioritizes administrative infrastructure over evidence development, potentially entrenching training models whose effectiveness remains largely unknown.

To further explain our skepticism about the ability to establish standards for de-escalation through LEDTA grants, consider the following. Due to the decentralized nature of policing in the United States, training resources, content, delivery, performance standards, and state mandates vary significantly across the 17,000-plus law enforcement departments nationwide (CCJ, 2021a; Gardner & Scott, 2022; NRC, 2004; PERF, 2022). For example, national comparisons of law enforcement training academies demonstrate differences in the total number of curriculum hours, the type of training models (stress vs. nonstress), the content of the training curriculum, and the methods for delivering training (Buehler, 2024; Sloan & Paoline, 2021, 2022; Sloan et al., 2025). The same is true for individual training curricula, including de-escalation training. There are also no uniform standards for assessing officer performance during training to ensure that officers sufficiently understand and can apply the material.

Further, there are open questions regarding the Trump administration's commitment to sustaining and prioritizing federal support and funding for de-escalation training. On April 28, 2025, the White House released Executive Order No. EO 14288, *Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect*

Innocent Citizens. Notably, the Executive Order requires that federal resources be maximized to “provide new best practices” to “aggressively police communities” and to “expand access and improve the quality of training,” but did not include any commitment to continued support for de-escalation training specifically. This omission, when considered alongside recent federal enforcement policies and practices that have reshaped federal-local law enforcement interactions through an emphasis on aggressive enforcement, expanded federal intervention in local jurisdictions, and public commentary from Trump administration officials that contradicts core principles of de-escalation (Cox et al., 2025; Lauer, 2026; Meyer, 2026; Smith, 2026), suggests declining levels of federal support for de-escalation training. Finally, in 2025, the scientific arm of the DOJ, (the National Institute of Justice, which has funded de-escalation training evaluations, cancelled numerous awards designated for law enforcement-related research and has not released any new funding solicitations to date in the Trump administration. In sum, there is substantial reason to conclude that prior federal investments in de-escalation training under LEDTA are unlikely to produce meaningful near-term impact.

Assessing the challenges facing the field, the University of Virginia’s Center for Public Safety and Justice interviewed various stakeholders, including law enforcement leaders, mental health professionals, crisis intervention specialists, and training experts and published its findings in a 2025 report. The report emphasized the need for sustained funding, robust evaluation metrics, and the integration of mental health components into training programs. Stakeholders described what they viewed as the essential role of high-quality, scenario-based, in-person, continuously reinforced de-escalation training to improve public safety outcomes. However, the report also identified significant challenges such as resource limitations, cultural resistance, and inconsistent standards across jurisdictions (UVA CPSJ, 2025). While the authors ultimately recommend prioritizing sustainable funding, technology adoption (e.g., training with virtual reality), and extending training to all law enforcement personnel, these recommendations are unlikely to be realized in the current political environment.

The use of de-escalation techniques has engendered controversy and polarizing policy and oversight discussions, in part because of contrasts between municipal policing practices and the operational approaches of federal law enforcement agents. Since late 2024, U.S. immigration enforcement has expanded substantially through a rapid increase in personnel and deployment of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Federal appropriations and administrative changes have enabled ICE to more than double its workforce in 2025–2026, adding approximately 12,000 officers and agents and significantly increasing national enforcement capacity (DHS, 2026; Katz, 2026). This expansion has resulted in substantial increases in arrests, detentions, and removals, including historically high levels of immigration detention, reflecting an unprecedented emphasis on interior enforcement (Craft & Witherspoon, 2026; ICE, 2025).

However, the rapid pace of hiring has raised oversight concerns regarding training adequacy, as multiple reports indicate that ICE has substantially shortened onboarding timelines during its 2025–2026 expansion and that officers generally receive less standardized de-escalation and crisis-intervention training than is common among many state and local law-enforcement agencies (Czopek & Uribe, 2026; DHS OIG, 2024; Hollingsworth, 2026; Katz, 2026; Lauer, 2026). A key challenge for public safety officials is the growing controversy that places municipal law enforcement leaders who prioritize advanced training and de-escalation practices at odds with federal law enforcement leaders, whose officers typically receive less training and use more force-oriented tactics, along with ongoing jurisdictional disputes over how uses of force by federal officers should be reported and investigated (Hennessy-Fiske & Berman, 2026; Londono & Robertson, 2026). As of this writing, the national public backlash to two fatal shootings of American citizens by federal agents in Minneapolis, Minn., in January 2026 has further polarized the political context of police de-escalation tactics and training (Brooks et al., 2026; Collinson, 2026).

In summary, despite bipartisan approval of LEDTA in 2022 during the Biden administration, continued federal support for police de-escalation training appears deeply unstable and faces significant risk of erosion.

Evaluating de-escalation training

Despite its central role in policing, officer training remains one of the least systematically evaluated areas of law enforcement practice (Engel et al., 2020a; Lum et al., 2016; NRC, 2004). In 2015, the report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing offered six pillars to guide law enforcement agencies toward effective crime reduction and stronger community relationships, organized under building trust and legitimacy; policy and oversight; technology and social media; community policing and crime reduction; officer training and education; and officer safety and wellness. These pillars were accompanied by more than 150 recommendations to advance police reform nationwide (*President’s Task Force, 2015*).

While the task force provided strategic vision, many of its recommendations were not grounded in rigorous empirical evidence. Subsequent analysis by Cynthia Lum and colleagues highlighted substantial gaps in the research base supporting the recommended reforms, particularly the 13 recommendations under the officer training and education pillar, making it difficult to determine which action items should be prioritized (Lum et al., 2016). Lum and her colleagues noted that

additional research is needed in every area of training discussed in the Task Force recommendations. In most cases, we know little about the impact of these training programs on officer knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Particularly important is understanding the extent to which improvement or changes in attitudes and knowledge as a result of training corresponds to behavioral change in interactions with the public (2016, 38).

Although few specific police training programs have been rigorously evaluated, concerns about the outdated nature of police training – and the need for more evidence-based, theory-informed approaches – have been raised for decades (Birzer, 2003; Blumberg et al., 2019; Mugford et al., 2013). Police training nationally is still largely grounded in a military or paramilitary model that emphasizes physical endurance, psychological stress, hierarchical decision-making, and enforcement. A 2018 national survey found that approximately 75 percent of police academies rely primarily on this stress-oriented training model (Buehler, 2021).³ The dominance of this approach is reflected in how training time is allocated. Surveys by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Buehler, 2021) and PERF (2015) also show that police academies devote substantially more instructional hours to firearms, defensive tactics, and patrol procedures than to communication skills, de-escalation, crisis intervention, or use of non-lethal force (see also Sloan et al., 2025).

This imbalance has prompted sustained criticism of police training practices for failing to prepare officers for the realities of their work (Johnston & Cheurprakobkit, 1998; Marion, 1998). While officers are routinely called upon to perform roles involving problem solving, community engagement, public health, and social services, their training remains heavily focused on enforcement and tactical skills (Bittner, 1970; Sloan et al., 2025). As a result, the prevailing training model is poorly aligned with community oriented policing goals and largely ignores principles

3. Specifically, in the 2018 Census of Law Enforcement Training Academies, 6.1% of police academies reported offering recruits all/mostly stress-oriented training, 16.4% reported offering slightly more stress-oriented training than non-stress-oriented training, and 52.3% reported offering a balance of stress- and nonstress-oriented training.

of adult learning, which emphasize critical thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence (Blumberg et al., 2019; Stoughton, 2014; Vodde, 2012). Critics further argue that stress-based, militarized training may condition officers toward escalation rather than de-escalation. In response, scholars and practitioners increasingly call for nonmilitary training models that promote fair and effective policing while preparing officers to manage crisis situations (CCJ, 2021a; PERF, 2015; Sloan et al., 2025). Such approaches aim to instill a service-oriented organizational culture, which they view as central to reducing the use of force and improving police–community relations.

Although direct comparative evaluations of military-based and alternative training models remain limited, emerging evidence suggests that nonstress or resilience-based training can improve officer decision-making, emotional regulation, and communication, with potential reductions in use of force (CCJ, 2021a; McCraty & Atkinson, 2012). These approaches rely on adult learning techniques, including scenario-based instruction and reflective practice, to better equip officers for the complex situations they encounter (Birzer, 2003; Blumberg et al., 2019). Based on the available evidence on training content, duration, and delivery, the Council of Criminal Justice recommends reallocating training time toward communication, de-escalation, procedural justice, and commonly encountered situations; adopting resilience-based, nonstress-oriented training models; incorporating varied instructional methods such as scenarios and group discussion; expanding recertification beyond firearms training; and developing national standards for police training and certification (CCJ, 2021a).

De-escalation training studies

Despite the generally unknown frequency of the use of various de-escalation tactics in the field (and their effectiveness in reducing the frequency and severity of police use of force), some research has specifically examined the impact of de-escalation training on these outcomes. While the intent of de-escalation training is multifaceted – improving officers’ decision-making, increasing knowledge, changing officers’ attitudes and perceptions regarding use of force and people in crisis, and improving responses during training scenarios – the most important outcome of the training is reducing the use and severity of force during encounters with individuals.

Assessing research quality is essential to determine whether study findings are credible and useful for informing policy and practice. Methodological rigor refers to the extent to which a study is well designed and executed to accurately measure outcomes, address alternative explanations, and enhance reliability, validity, and generalizability. Studies with higher methodological rigor provide greater confidence in causal relationships and are more likely to yield findings that extend beyond the specific study context (Farrington, 2003; Ratcliffe, 2023; Sherman et al., 1998).

Purely *descriptive studies* typically measure outcomes (e.g., use of force) at only one point in time (e.g., after training, with no control group). These studies cannot establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the training and the outcome. *Nonexperimental studies* measure outcomes (e.g., use of force) at multiple points in time (e.g., before and after training) only within the same group (e.g., trained officers), and with no comparison group (e.g., untrained officers). These studies cannot discern if any other factors had simultaneous impact on the outcome. *Quasi-experimental studies* measure outcomes (e.g., use of force) at multiple points in time (e.g., before and after training) by comparing groups (e.g., trained and untrained officers), using statistical controls for other factors, or using comparison groups with only minor differences. Finally, *randomized control trial (RCT) studies* measure outcomes (e.g., use of force) at multiple points in time (e.g., before and after training) after randomly assigning comparable groups to treatment (e.g., training) or control (e.g., no training). RCT studies are typically regarded by researchers as having the strongest design, followed by quasi-experimental designs (Farrington, 2003; Ratcliffe, 2023; Sherman et al., 1998). For policymakers, while descriptive and nonexperimental studies may be interesting, more advanced studies identify what is promising or what works (Ratcliffe, 2023).

We synthesize the available research evaluating de-escalation training by organizing studies into three categories based on the outcomes they examine: 1) observed changes in officer behavior in the field; 2) changes in officers’ self-reported behavior or performance during training simulations; and 3) changes in officers’ self-reported knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes. While considering the potential impact of training on each of these outcomes is important, only the first directly measures changes in use of force, subject injuries, and officer injuries. As a guide for policymakers and practitioners, to have a reliable assessment of what works, de-escalation evaluation studies must meet both of the following criteria: 1) measures changes in officers’ behavior in the field; and 2) using experimental (strongest) or quasi-experimental designs.

1. Impact on officer behavior in the field

Our review of the available evaluations of de-escalation training, therefore, begins with studies that measure changes in officer behavior in the field as the outcome of interest (Table 2). Based on a search of the available literature, we identified eight studies that estimated the impact of de-escalation training on officer behavior in the field with a sufficient level of scientific rigor to determine what is promising and what works.

Table 2. Summary of Studies Evaluating the Impact of De-escalation Training on Police Behavior in the Field

Year	Authors	Design	Peer Review	Research Sponsor	Agency	Training Name & Creator	Training Details	Data Sources & Analysis	Use of Force	Subject Injury	Officer Injury	Use of skills
2025	Dube, MacArthur, & Shah	Exp-RCT	Yes	Griffin Foundation	Chicago (IL) Police Dept	Situational Decision-making (Chicago Crime Lab)	2,070 officers trained 16 hrs across 4 sessions Lecture, interactive activities, scenarios	Survey, vignettes, simulator exercises, arrest & UOF Reports Multivariate regression	✓ -23%	X	✓ -48%*	X
2025	Engel, Corsaro, Motz, & Cherkaskas	Exp-RCT (SW)	Under review	NIJ	Indianapolis (IN) Metropolitan Police Dept	ICAT (PERF)	1,563 officers trained 8 hrs Lecture, group discussion	UOF Reports Poisson crossover panel regression	✓ -20%	✓ -25%	O	X
2025	McLean, Bussey, Nix, Rojek, & Alpert	Exp-RCT	Under review	NIJ	Virginia Beach (VA) Police Dept	Basic Skills of Influence (Polis)	294 officers trained 11 hrs total Interactive classroom training, online practice sessions	SO of BWC footage ITS OLS regression	O	X	X	✓

2023, 2025	White, Orosco, & Watts	Exp-RCT	Yes	BJA	Tempe (AZ) Police Dept	PATROL (internal dev'l, based on LAPD)	216 officers trained 10 hrs Lecture, scenarios, online refreshers	SO of BWC footage, community surveys ANOVA, Negative binomial regression	O**	✓ -58%	O	✓
2022	Engel, Corsaro, Isaza, & McManus	Exp-RCT (SW)	Yes	Arnold Ventures	Louisville (KY) Metro Police Dept	ICAT (PERF)	1,049 officers trained 16 hrs Lecture, group discussion, scenarios	UOF Reports Poisson crossover panel regression	✓ -28%	✓ -26%	✓ -36%	X
2020	McLean, Wolfe, Rojek, Alpert, & Smith	Exp-RCT	Yes	NIJ	Fayetteville (NC) & Tucson (AZ) Police Depts	T3 (Polis)	451 officers trained 13-27 hrs depending on dosage Lecture, video exercises	UOF Reports ITS	O	X	X	X
2025	Engel, Corsaro, Motz, & Cherkaskas	Quasi-Exp	Under review	NIJ	Cincinnati (OH) Police Dept	DTC (internally dev'l, based on ICAT)	893 officers trained Three 4-hr blocks Lecture, group discussion, skill practice, & scenarios	UOF Reports GLM count regression	O	O	O	X
2021	Goh	Quasi-Exp	Yes	N/A	Camden County (NJ) Police Dept	ICAT (PERF)	432 officers trained # hrs not specified Lecture, group discussion, scenarios	UOF Reports Poisson regression	✓ -40%***	X	X	X

✓ = Statistically significant impact of training in expected direction (reduction), O = no support for training impact, X = not assessed

*Officer injuries are based on days off due to injury on duty (IOD). As the authors acknowledge, IOD can result from various officer activities, not just use of force (Dube et al., 2025)

**No significant differences in overall UOF between treatment and control officers, but some notable differences in the frequency of specific types of force

***Comparing CCPD to 36 other large regional PDs in NJ; analysis of individual officers suggests ICAT training had no significant effects on serious use of force

Note: ANOVA = Analysis of Variance; BJA = Bureau of Justice Assistance; DID = Difference-in-Difference; DTC = De-escalation through Tactical Communication; Exp-RCT = Experimental Randomized Control Trial; Exp-SW RCT = Experimental Stepped Wedge Randomized Control Trial; ICAT = Integrating Communications, Assessment & Tactics; ITS = Interrupted Time Series; OLS = Ordinary Least Squares; NIJ = National Institute of Justice; PATROL = Planning, Assessment, Time, Re-deploy, Other resources, Lines of communication; PERF = Police Executive Research Forum; Quasi-Exp = Quasi-Experimental; SO = Systematic Observation, T3 = Tact, Tactics, and Trust; UOF = Use of Force

Of these eight studies, three evaluate the same de-escalation program – Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) – implemented across different jurisdictions and time periods. Developed by PERF in 2016, ICAT is one of the most widely adopted de-escalation trainings in the United States, with hundreds of agencies nationwide having implemented the program (PERF, n.d.). Collectively, evaluations of ICAT provide promising evidence of reductions in police use of force and subject injuries, with one study also documenting reductions in officer injuries.

Similarly, a recent evaluation of Situational Decision-Making (Sit-D) training found significant reductions in police use of force, officer injuries, and racial disparities in arrests. Sit-D was developed by the University of Chicago Crime Lab and tested in partnership with the Chicago Police Department. The remaining four trainings evaluated – Tact, Tactics, & Trust (T3), *Basic Skills of Influence*, *De-escalation through Tactical Communication and Tactics* (DTC), and Planning, Assessment, Time, Redeploy, Other resources, and Lines of Communication (PATROL) – failed to show consistent reductions in use of force, although PATROL was associated with fewer subject injuries.

A key finding of this review is that, despite the widespread adoption of de-escalation training, including state-mandated programs and training supported by federal funding, very few training models have been rigorously evaluated for their impact on officers’ actual use of force. To date, only six de-escalation training curricula have been empirically tested on this outcome, with just two training programs showing evidence of reduced police use of force: ICAT and Situational Decision-Making (Sit-D).

Situational Decision-Making (Sit-D)

- Initially developed in 2018-19 by affiliates from the University of Chicago Crime Lab with practical feedback from Chicago Police Department trainers
- Purpose: teach officers to develop multiple perspectives on ambiguous situations by moving beyond first impressions and considering alternatives before responding.
- Total 16 hours
 - Four 4-hour sessions (total 16 hours), with multiple week breaks between each
- Mix of classroom learning (lecture, interactive activities) and scenario-based exercises
 - 1st two sessions more classroom-based
 - 2nd two sessions entirely scenario-based
- **Training modules focus on:**
- Thinking tactic model
- Recognition and regulation of stress triggers
- Cognitive biases
- Deliberate consideration of alternative explanations and responses during encounters as well as consequences of each

(Dube et al., 2025)

Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT)

- Developed in 2016 by the Police Executive Research Forum
- Purpose: provide officers practical de-escalation and critical thinking skills to manage interactions with the public, especially individuals who are unarmed or armed with non-firearm weapons
- Total 12 hours (across 2 consecutive days)
 - 8 hours classroom learning (inc. lecture, video case studies, group disc)
 - 4 hours scenario-based exercises
- **Seven modules focusing on:**
 - Introduction/Overview of ICAT
 - Critical Decision Making (CDM) model
 - Crisis recognition & response
 - Tactical communications
 - Suicide by cop
 - Operational safety tactics
 - Step up & step in (peer intervention)

(PERF, 2023)

2. Impact on officer self-reported behavior or performance during simulations

Table 3 below summarizes findings from the five available studies that examine self-reported officer behavior (e.g., officers self-reporting the use of de-escalation tactics during police–subject encounters) or behavioral changes observed during training simulations. Three of these studies are extensions of the behavior evaluations of the Sit-D, DTC, and PATROL training programs previously noted.

In combination, these studies provide complementary evidence that officers report increases in use of de-escalation tactics following ICAT training. Other studies have measured self-reported officer behavior, but only at a single point in time (post-training) and therefore are not included in Table 3. While these studies of ICAT training cannot assess changes in self-reported behavior over time, they demonstrate that officers who are the most receptive to training are also more likely to self-report their use of de-escalation in the field (Engel et al., 2022b). Importantly, the surveys also show that officers’ perceived peer and supervisor support for training significantly predicts their self-reported frequency of their use of de-escalation skills in the field (Engel et al., 2022b, 2025a).

Measuring performance during training simulations is an important intermediate measure to test the validity of training modalities. One study, Sit-D training, showed significant improvements in officer performance during training simulations; a second, Verbal Judo, showed mixed evidence that officers’ performance improved. The infrequency of this type of research suggests that de-escalation training curricula are unlikely to be substantially modified due to the lack of feedback on their effectiveness. While experts suggest that scenario-based learning, problem-based learning, and regular booster or refresher trainings represent best practices in police training, hands-on experiential learning and skill practice components and opportunities are at best inadequate, and at worst nonexistent in police training across the country (CCJ, 2021a; O’Neill et al., 2019; Sloan & Paoline, 2022). Additionally, these trainings face challenges in effective implementation, agency resource allocation for scenario-based training, and presenting comprehensive scenarios to test the trained tactics and skills (PERF, 2022).

Law enforcement training, like all facets of police operations, should leverage technology. Recent advancements in virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) demonstrate the potential of adaptive interventions to enhance training outcomes in public safety (Kittel et al., 2024; Maddalon et al., 2024; Vyas et al., 2023). This type of training enables public safety personnel to engage in realistic, high-fidelity, virtual scenarios that may be unsafe or impractical to replicate in real life (Engelbrecht et al., 2019; Lavoie et al., 2023; Martaindale et al., 2024). But the effectiveness of these training modalities for de-escalation training specifically remains untested.

3. Impact on officer attitudes

While it has long been argued that changes in attitudes are a necessary precursor to changes in behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980), more recent research has called into question both the strength and necessity of this relationship, demonstrating that behavior can change independent of attitudinal change and that attitude change often produces only modest or inconsistent behavioral effects (Marteau et al., 2012; Sheeran, 2002; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Although the attitude–behavior link has been extensively examined in studies of police enforcement behavior, it has rarely been directly tested in the context of police training. As a result, it remains unclear whether police training meaningfully alters officers’ attitudes and, if so, whether any attitudinal changes translate into changes in officers’ behavior in the field. Nevertheless, among the available studies evaluating de-escalation training, most focus on changes in officers’ attitudes. This emphasis likely reflects the relative ease of measuring attitudinal change after training, as survey instruments can be readily deployed across large numbers of agencies to evaluate a single training curriculum. Table 4 summarizes eight studies that examine the

Table 3. Summary of Studies Evaluating the Impact of De-escalation Training on Self-Reported or Training-Simulated Behavior

Year	Authors	Design	Peer Review	Research Sponsor	Agency	Training Name & Creator	Training Details	Data Sources & Analysis	Increased Self-Reported Use of De-escalation Skills	More Appropriate or Reduced Force in Simulation
2025	Dube, MacArthur, & Shah	Exp-RCT	Yes	Griffin Foundation	Chicago (IL) Police Dept	Situational Decision-making (Chicago Crime Lab)	2,070 officers trained 16 hrs across 4 sessions Lecture, interactive activities, scenarios	Survey, vignettes, simulations, arrest & UOF reports Multivariate regressions	✓	✓
2021	White, Mora, Orosco & Hedberg	Exp-RCT	Yes	BJA	Tempe (AZ) Police Dept	PATROL (internal dev'l, based on LAPD)	216 officers trained 10 hrs Lecture, scenarios, online refreshers	Repeated measures surveys Econometric random effects	✓ 3 of 10 tactics	X
2025	Engel, Corsaro, Motz, & Cherkaukas	Quasi-Exp	Under review	NIJ	Cincinnati (OH) Police Dept	DTC (internally dev'l, based on ICAT)	893 officers trained Three 4-hr blocks Lecture, group discussion, skill practice, scenarios	Repeated measures surveys T-tests, ANOVA	O	X
2025	Steele, Lynn, Hayes, & Augustine	Non-Exp	Yes	COPS Office	Multiple agencies in Midwest & New England	De-escalation: Principles & Practice (Nat'l De-escalation Training Center)	1,619 officers trained 16 hrs Lecture, scenarios	Coded behavior during simulation Chi-square tests	✓	X
2020	Giacomantonio, Goodwin, & Carmichael	Non-Exp	Yes	N/A	Halifax (Canada) Regional Police	Verbal Judo (Dr. George Thompson)	634 officers trained One day Lecture, role playing, videos, simulation	SO of recorded simulations Chi-square, t-tests	✓ 4 of 15 behaviors	O

✓ = Statistically significant impact of training in expected direction, O = no support for training impact, X = not assessed

*Baseline data collected from control group that was subset of all trained officers; some significant differences between baseline and treatment groups

Note: ANOVA = Analysis of Variance; BJA = Bureau of Justice Assistance; COPS = Community Oriented Policing Services; DTC = De-escalation through Tactical Communication; Exp-RCT = Experimental Randomized Control Trial; LAPD = Los Angeles Police Department; NIJ = National Institute of Justice; PATROL = Planning, Assessment, Time, Re-deploy, Other resources, Lines of communication; PERF = Police Executive Research Forum; Quasi-Exp = Quasi-Experimental; SO = Systematic Observation; UOF = Use of Force

effects of various de-escalation training programs on officers’ self-reported attitudes and perceptions across multiple law enforcement agencies. The most commonly assessed attitudes relate to the use of force, interactions with the public, and encounters involving individuals in crisis. Collectively, these studies indicate that de-escalation training is often associated with short-term changes in certain officer attitudes immediately following training.

Table 4. Summary of Studies Examining the Impact of De-escalation Training on Officers’ Self-Reported Attitudes & Perceptions

Year	Authors	Design	Peer Review	Research Sponsor	Agency	Training Name & Creator	Training Details	Data Sources & Analysis	Measured Attitudes	Immediate Positive Change	No Evidence of Training Decay
2021	White, Mora, Orosco & Hedberg	Exp-RCT	Yes	BJA	Tempe (AZ) Police Dept	PATROL (internal dev'l, based on LAPD)	216 officers trained 10 hrs Lecture, scenarios, online refreshers	Pre-post surveys T-tests, random effects model	Importance of de-esc tactics, toward de-escalation training	✓	X
2020	McLean, Wolfe, Rojek, Alpert, & Smith	Exp-RCT	Yes	NIJ	Fayetteville (NC) & Tucson (AZ) Police Depts	T3 (Polis)	451 officers trained 13-27 hrs dosage (varies based on exp condition) 2 hrs lecture, 7-13 hrs video exercises, 4 hrs refresher, 8 hrs capstone	Pre-post surveys DID regression	PJ priorities, maintaining self-control, physical control priorities	✓ only for PJ priorities	X
2025	Engel, Corsaro, Motz, & Cherkaskas	Non-Exp	Under review	NIJ	Indianapolis (IN) Metropolitan Police Dept	ICAT (PERF)	1,563 officers trained 8 hrs Lecture, group discussion	Repeated measures surveys Paired t-tests, ANOVA	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ for all	O
2025	Engel, Corsaro, Motz, & Cherkaskas	Non-Exp	Under review	NIJ	Cincinnati (OH) Police Dept	DTC (internal dev'l, based on ICAT)	893 officers trained Three 4-hr blocks Lecture, group discussion Skill practice, & scenarios	Repeated measures surveys T-tests, ANOVA	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ only for PIC	X

2025	Isaza, Motz, McManus & Corsaro	Non-Exp	Yes		New Jersey (agencies statewide)	ICAT	31,000+ officers trained 12 hrs Lecture, group discussion, Practice scenarios	Pre-Post Surveys T-tests	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ for all	X
2024	Isaza, Engel, & Motz	Non-Exp	No	COPS Office	Officers from 19 US agencies	Applied De-escalation Tactics (Law Enforcement Innovation Center)	41 officers trained 24 hrs Lecture, videos Role play or simulator, teach back exercises	Pre-Post surveys Paired t-tests	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ but not UOF	X
2020	Engel, Corsaro, Isaza, & McManus	Non-Exp	No	Arnold Ventures	Louisville (KY) Metro Police Dept	ICAT (PERF)	1,049 officers trained 16 hrs Lecture, group discussion Practice scenarios	Repeated measures surveys Paired t-tests, ANOVA	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ for all	O
2019	Isaza, McManus, Engel, & Corsaro	Non-Exp	No		Univ of Cincinnati (OH) Police Division	ICAT	62 officers trained 16 hrs Lecture, group discussion Practice scenarios	Repeated measures surveys Paired t-tests	Toward PIC, UOF, & interactions with public	✓ only for UOF	O

✓ = Statistically significant impact of training in expected direction, O = no support for training impact, X = not assessed

Note: ANOVA = Analysis of Variance; BJA = Bureau of Justice Assistance; COPS = Community Oriented Policing Services; DID = Difference-in-Difference; DTC = De-escalation through Tactical Communication; Exp-RCT = Experimental Randomized Control Trial; ICAT = Integrating Communications, Assessment & Tactics; LAPD = Los Angeles Police Department; NIJ = National Institute of Justice; PATROL = Planning, Assessment, Time, Re-deploy, Other resources, Lines of communication; PIC = Persons in Crisis; PJ = Procedural Justice; T3 = Tact, Tactics, and Trust; UOF = Use of Force

Four of the eight studies also examined whether these attitudinal changes persisted over time. Of those, two found that the initial changes diminished during longer follow-up periods, suggesting potential training decay. Notably, none of the studies evaluated whether changes in officers' attitudes translated into changes in actual behavior in the field.

In summary, while the evidence indicates that de-escalation training can produce short-term attitudinal shifts, there is also evidence that these effects are not sustained. Moreover, it remains unclear whether changes in officer attitudes have any measurable impact on police use of force. Although this line of research is relatively easy to conduct and has expanded rapidly across jurisdictions - including at least one statewide study - it has yielded limited guidance for policymakers and practitioners.

Implications for future research

Overall, the evidence on how de-escalation training influences officers' attitudes and behaviors remains limited, with mixed but cautiously promising findings. Rigorous, context-specific research is needed to better understand how training design, duration, delivery methods, and reinforcement strategies affect officer behavior during potentially volatile enforcement encounters (CCJ, 2021a). To date, few studies have examined the role of supervisory reinforcement or broader organizational support in sustaining training effects over time (Engel et al., 2022b).

Several methodological limitations further constrain confidence in the validity and generalizability of the existing literature. These include substantial variation across de-escalation training programs; reliance on nonexperimental research designs lacking comparable control groups; limited assessment of behavioral outcomes; emphasis on short-term effects; and a relative lack of officer-focused analyses. As a result, guidance on de-escalation training – and broader discussions about promoting safer police-public interactions – continues to rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and largely untested assumptions about “best practices.”

Recognizing that use of force incidents are relatively rare, scholars have increasingly called for broader outcome measures beyond force reduction alone, including community satisfaction, procedural justice, and officers' emotional regulation (White et al., 2023). Advancing this work requires opening the “black box” of de-escalation training by examining not only whether it works, but how and under what conditions it shapes the dynamics of police encounters (Bennell et al., 2021).

Few studies have directly examined how frequently officers employ specific de-escalation tactics, how effective those tactics are in practice, or what barriers limit their use in the field. Recent research has begun addressing this gap through systematic social observation using in-person observations and body-worn camera (BWC) footage (Terrill & Zimmerman, 2022; Terrill et al., 2023; Todak & James, 2018). The widespread adoption of BWCs presents a unique opportunity for more nuanced, real-time assessments of police-subject interactions. Leveraging BWC data for systematic observation can help identify gaps between training and practice, improve policy compliance, and strengthen accountability, ultimately contributing to enhanced public trust in law enforcement.

Variation in de-escalation training content and delivery further complicates evaluation efforts. De-escalation trainings differ widely in instructional approach, duration, and reinforcement strategies (White et al., 2023), underscoring the importance of program comparisons for improving effectiveness. Evidence remains limited regarding which training formats – such as dosage, spacing, and refresher sessions – best promote learning and prevent skill decay. For example, Cincinnati's phased Defensive Tactics and Communications (DTC) training was designed to reinforce classroom lessons through subsequent sessions; however, the extended timeline may have diluted its impact and hindered skill retention (Engel et al., 2025b).

At the same time, technological innovations such as virtual reality (VR) have emerged as promising training modalities. VR offers consistent, cost-effective, and immersive learning experiences that are comparable to live, scenario-based training. A recent study comparing VR and live-action mental health crisis-response training found these formats equally effective in improving de-escalation skills through scenario-based exercises, with neither approach perceived as overly stressful or cognitively demanding (Lavoie et al., 2023). These findings suggest VR may be particularly well-suited for training tasks that require communication, judgment, and decision-making under pressure. Nevertheless, further research is needed to determine the optimal sequencing, duration, and reinforcement of VR-based and hybrid training models to sustain behavioral change in the field.

As agencies increasingly adapt de-escalation curricula to meet operational constraints, systematic evaluation of these modifications becomes critical. For instance, Indianapolis achieved notable reductions in use of force incidents following ICAT training despite shortening the training duration and eliminating scenario-based practice. Future studies should more closely examine training dosage and skill decay, particularly for competencies most vulnerable to erosion over time. Multiagency studies are especially valuable in illuminating implementation processes, demonstrating that while innovation and flexibility are often necessary, fidelity to core training components remains essential for achieving desired outcomes.

With only a small number of studies examining the impact of de-escalation training on use of force and injury outcomes, additional replication across diverse contexts is urgently needed. Future research should also explore the relationship between de-escalation tactics and injury frequency and severity. Analyses of injury types, event characteristics, force categories, and the attributes of injured officers and subjects remain largely absent from existing evaluations. Addressing these gaps will require improved data systems and more sophisticated analytical approaches capable of disentangling situational context, subject resistance, and escalation dynamics.

Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of mixed-methods evaluation strategies. By integrating waved training surveys, supervisor assessments, administrative records, and qualitative methods such as focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015), researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of both training impacts and the broader organizational ecology of de-escalation. Such approaches not only advance knowledge about whether training is effective, but also clarify how, when, and under what conditions it produces meaningful change, thereby strengthening the evidence base for policy and practice.

Implications for practitioners

For police agencies seeking to implement or strengthen de-escalation training, the limited but growing body of research underscores the importance of selecting evidence-based training models and maintaining fidelity to their core components, including content, dosage, and delivery methods. Effective implementation also requires embedding de-escalation principles throughout the organization by aligning training with agency policy, supervision, and data systems. Across studies, sustained organizational support, particularly active supervisory reinforcement, emerges as a critical factor in translating training into practice. Training or policy changes introduced in isolation are unlikely to produce durable reductions in police use of force or related injuries. Instead, agencies must adopt a holistic, agencywide approach that integrates supervisory and command-level reinforcement, systematic data collection and analysis, and clear accountability mechanisms. Notably, the strongest outcomes have been observed in comprehensive training programs that emphasize decision-making under high-stress or crisis conditions, which have been associated with reductions in use of force, subject injuries, and officer injuries.

The central role of first-line supervisors in reinforcing de-escalation training was initially documented in evaluations of ICAT implementation in Louisville (Engel et al., 2021; 2022b). In that context, officers' perceptions of supervisory support were strongly associated with their self-reported use of de-escalation techniques in the field. However, despite supervisors' confidence in their ability to oversee and coach de-escalation skills, they reported relatively infrequent engagement in activities that reinforced these practices. Similar patterns were observed in subsequent evaluations in Indianapolis and Cincinnati. In Indianapolis, officers whose supervisors reinforced ICAT principles were 1.7 times more likely to self-report frequent use of de-escalation skills than officers who did not receive such reinforcement (Engel et al., 2025a). Yet fewer than 25 percent of supervisors reported frequently engaging in reinforcement activities, despite expressing high confidence in coaching and a belief that de-escala-

tion improved encounter outcomes. In Cincinnati, both supervisory reinforcement of de-escalation techniques and officers' perceptions of organizational support declined over time, suggesting persistent challenges in sustaining training effects across agencies (Engel et al., 2025b).

Evidence from Louisville, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati demonstrates that initial enthusiasm for de-escalation training may erode without continued reinforcement. Although officers initially reported high confidence in their ability to use de-escalation tactics, self-reported skill use declined significantly at follow-up. These findings indicate that agencies must prioritize strategies to increase supervisory receptivity and reinforce training through multiple, complementary mechanisms, including incident debriefs, coaching and mentoring, performance evaluations, recognition programs, and disciplinary systems that clearly communicate expectations for de-escalation when feasible (Engel et al., 2022b). Taken together, this body of research highlights first-line supervisors as a critical leverage point for improving the uptake and sustained use of de-escalation tactics among officers.

To reinforce use of force principles, agencies should establish clear accountability systems that both reward and address officers' adherence to policy and training expectations. These systems should explicitly recognize effective use of de-escalation tactics, particularly in situations where officers successfully resolve high-risk or critical incidents without resorting to force. For example, agencies can develop formal processes to identify and commend officers who demonstrably employ de-escalation strategies to avert or minimize force, including documentation in use of force reports, supervisor evaluations, letters of commendation, awards, or other institutional forms of recognition. Consistently acknowledging effective de-escalation can help shift organizational norms by signaling that these skills are valued and central to professional performance.

At the same time, agencies must maintain mechanisms to identify and address clear violations of use of force policy and training standards. A systematic process for monitoring officers' use of force in the field is essential to ensure both accountability and learning. Use of force reviews should routinely assess and document officers' use — or failure to use — de-escalation tactics when consistent with policy, training, and situational constraints. Incorporating de-escalation explicitly into review, supervision, and disciplinary processes reinforces expectations, supports consistent application of policy, and strengthens the connection between training and operational practice.

Research findings also carry important implications for training design, refinement, and testing. National and local trainers should systematically incorporate evaluation results to continuously improve de-escalation curricula. For example, early evaluations of ICAT, particularly findings related to training decay and the influence of supervision, prompted revisions to the curriculum and contributed to its rapid expansion nationwide (Engel et al., 2020b; 2022b). Importantly, most police agencies can conduct at least basic evaluations of de-escalation training without substantial financial investment or reliance on limited federal resources. Because agencies typically cannot train all personnel simultaneously due to operational constraints, they can leverage staggered training schedules to randomize timing and conduct meaningful comparisons between trained and untrained officers.

Finally, agencies should invest in data systems that routinely document de-escalation efforts in official incident reports, ideally across all police-subject encounters and not solely in use of force events (PERF, 2021). Systematic documentation serves several critical purposes: It provides quantitative measures of how frequently and in what ways de-escalation tactics are used; enables assessment of their effectiveness and relationship to force and injury outcomes; and reinforces organizational priorities by signaling that agency leadership and supervisors value de-escalation when feasible. Together, these practices can help institutionalize de-escalation within departmental culture and support ongoing evaluation, learning, and improvement (White et al., 2023).

Call to action

Public expectations of policing are evolving rapidly, and agencies face growing pressure to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Meeting these demands requires leadership and courage to test, learn, and adapt — moving beyond traditional approaches toward evidence-based innovation, even when results challenge assumptions.

Whether modifying proven models, developing new curricula, implementing policy changes, or continuing long-standing practices, agencies must rigorously evaluate their impact. Evaluation is not simply about confirming effectiveness; it is about identifying the conditions that make training and policy successful. Executive-level commitment is essential. Police leaders should not shy away from testing reforms out of fear of negative findings. Whether study results are positive, negative, or mixed, the act of evaluation itself drives progress and fosters a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement (Sherman, 2013; Lum et al., 2016).

Agencies that invite independent researchers and embrace empirical scrutiny signal a commitment to learning and adaptation. This approach builds trust, strengthens legitimacy, and ensures reforms are guided by evidence rather than tradition. Political and police leaders nationwide should recognize this truth: safer, more equitable policing depends on embracing research - not avoiding it. More research equals better outcomes, which is why continued funding and support of policing research are essential.

The path forward: Policy priorities for advancing de-escalation training

To ensure that training reforms achieve their intended outcomes, policymakers must move toward more strategic, evidence-driven investments in de-escalation training and its evaluation. Absent a clear framework for coordination, assessment, and learning, training initiatives risk consuming substantial public resources without delivering measurable improvements in public and officer safety, changes in officer behavior, or improvement in public trust. Strengthening the empirical and organizational foundations of police training is therefore essential for informed decision-making and sustainable reform.

To date, federal investments in de-escalation training have been characterized by fragmentation rather than strategic alignment. Funding has been distributed across a wide array of federal and state grants with limited collective oversight, coordination, or shared performance metrics. The small number of available training evaluations suggests that, in many cases, the observed impacts have been modest relative to the scale of investment. Despite federal spending, there remains no comprehensive national strategy guiding the development, implementation, or assessment of de-escalation training. Greater emphasis on state-level infrastructure, where training standards, certification, and delivery are already embedded, may offer a more consistent and durable approach to building training capacity.

At the same time, the research base evaluating de-escalation training remains underdeveloped. Few rigorous studies have examined training effects; findings are mixed, and comparisons across programs are difficult due to the absence of standardized definitions, outcome measures, or core training components. Existing de-escalation curricula vary widely in content, duration, instructional methods, and reinforcement strategies, limiting the ability of policymakers to identify which approaches are most effective or scalable.

Finally, these structural and evidentiary gaps are emerging at a moment when broader shifts in policing discourse may affect the long-term viability of de-escalation as a reform strategy. Signals from the field suggest that the emphasis on de-escalation may be weakening as competing operational priorities and enforcement narratives gain prominence. Without stronger research evidence, clearer messaging, and institutional support, particularly framing de-escalation as an officer safety and effectiveness strategy, momentum for training reform risks stagnation.

Against this backdrop, the following recommendations outline a more coordinated, evidence-based path for advancing the development, evaluation, and institutionalization of de-escalation training. Meaningful and sustainable progress will require recalibrating current policy and funding strategies away from isolated pilot programs and toward embedding de-escalation principles within the institutions that shape policing practice nationwide.

First, state-level training and certification bodies must be more directly engaged. State-level law enforcement training boards and accreditation commissions play a central role in defining minimum training requirements, certifying officers, and shaping professional norms. Yet they are peripheral rather than central to federal de-escalation reform efforts. Future policy initiatives should explicitly partner with, resource, and leverage state boards to ensure that de-escalation training is not treated as an optional add-on, but instead is integrated into standards for recruitment, certification, in-service training, and supervisory development.

Second, federal and state investments should prioritize collaborating with established national training and professional organizations rather than dispersing resources across small or unfamiliar entities. There are numerous national training and membership organizations with credibility, infrastructure, and deep reach into the field. These organizations are well-positioned to scale evidence-informed training, align it with policy guidance, and influence both line officers and leadership. Past approaches that concentrated funding on small nonprofit organizations with limited credibility or that created new training centers in academic institutions with little field recognition have struggled to achieve meaningful penetration or long-term influence. Redirecting coordination and investments toward organizations and institutions with established credibility among practitioners would significantly enhance both adoption and long-term sustainability.

Third, substantially more rigorous research is needed to test the effectiveness of different de-escalation training curricula and delivery models. While support for de-escalation is widespread, decision makers still lack clear guidance on which approaches work best, under what conditions, and for whom. Future research should move beyond simple pre- and post-training surveys to include comparative designs, behavioral outcomes, injury metrics, and long-term follow-up. Policymakers should prioritize funding for replication studies across diverse agencies, with particular attention to training dosage, reinforcement strategies, and organizational context.

Finally, and most critically, de-escalation must be more clearly framed and communicated as an officer-safety and wellness strategy. Although de-escalation is often discussed in terms of reducing use of force and injuries to individuals subjected to it, and of promoting public trust in law enforcement, the evidence increasingly suggests that effective de-escalation can also reduce injuries to officers. It is also likely that reductions in the application of force will promote officers' mental health and wellness. This officer-safety/wellness dimension has been underemphasized in past reform efforts. In the current climate — marked by heightened concern over assaults on officers, retention challenges, and morale—repositioning de-escalation as a tool that helps officers reduce risk may be the most effective way to sustain momentum. Policymakers should support research that explicitly examines officer injury outcomes and invest in messaging that presents de-escalation not as a constraint on policing, but as a professional skill set that enhances officer safety, wellness, and effectiveness.

Taken together, these steps offer a pragmatic path forward: institutionalize de-escalation through state standards, scale it through trusted national organizations, strengthen it through rigorous evaluation, and sustain it by clearly linking it to officer safety. This approach is likely to be more resilient – and more persuasive – than prior reform strategies, and more likely to keep policing policies and practices on a forward path.

About the authors

Robin S. Engel, PhD, serves as Senior Research Scientist at the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University, Adjunct Professor at the University of Cincinnati, and Senior Advisor for 21st Century Policing Solutions (21CP). Previous positions include Vice President for Safety and Reform and Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati, and Director of the Center for Police Research and Policy at the International Association of Chiefs of Police. She is a four-time governor-appointed member of the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board, and Director of the recently launched Consortium to Advance Police Supervision. Dr. Engel has spent her career generating and testing evidence-based policing practices, transforming police agencies through reform efforts, implementing violence reduction strategies, and advancing police first-line supervision. As an award-winning researcher, she has partnered with dozens of police agencies in the U.S. and internationally and led nearly 150 research studies and projects.

Jennifer Cherkaskas, PhD, is a Research Scientist at the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University, following two decades of research and project management experience in positions at the University of Cincinnati, the National Policing Institute, and 21CP Solutions. Dr. Cherkaskas has partnered with dozens of state, local, and university police agencies on projects to understand patrol officer enforcement behavior, evaluate violence-reduction strategies, and implement organizational reform. Her work is driven by a commitment to evidence-based practices and academic-practitioner partnerships. She earned her doctorate in Crime, Law and Justice from Pennsylvania State University.

References

- Scantwait. (2024). #8CantWait Updates since June 2020. <https://8cantwait.org/>
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behavior relations: A theoretical analysis and review of empirical research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 84(5), 888–918. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.84.5.888>
- Alpert, G. P., & Smith, M. R. (1999). Police use-of-force data: Where we are and where we should be going. *Police Quarterly*, 2(1), 57-78.
- Anderson, S., Seacrest, L., Smith, C.M., & Snider, J. (2024). *Exploring De-Escalation Training: Programs, Impact, and Resourcing*. R Street Policy Study No. 307. Washington, D.C.: R Street Institute. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/exploring-de-escalation-training-programs-impact-and-resourcing/>
- Anderson, S. & Snider, J. (2024). The Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act of 2022: Purpose, Implementation, and Next Steps. Washington, D.C.: R Street Institute. <https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/FINAL-law-enforcement-04-24-1.pdf>
- Bennell, C., Alpert, G., Andersen, J.P., Arpaia, J., Huhta, J.M., Kahn, K.B., Khanizadeh, A.J., McCarthy, M., McLean, K., Mitchell, R.J., Nieuwenhuys, A., Palmer, A., & White, M.D. (2021). Advancing police use of force research and practice: Urgent issues and prospects. *Legal and criminological psychology*, 26(2), pp.121-144.
- Birzer, M. L. (2003). The theory of andragogy applied to police training. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, 26(1), 29-42.
- Bishopp, S. A., Klinger, D. A., & Morris, R. G. (2015). An examination of the effect of a policy change on police use of TASERs. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 26(7), 727-746.
- Bittner, E. (1970). *The Functions of Police in Modern Society*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Blake, D. (2017, November 3). Does de-escalation endanger police officers or save lives? *PoliceOne*. Retrieved from <https://www.police1.com/de-escalation/articles/does-de-escalation-endanger-police-officers-or-save-lives-OIZLF0eXsWsz8ubN/>
- Blumberg, D. M., Schlosser, M. D., Papazoglou, K., Creighton, S., & Kaye, C. C. (2019). New directions in police academy training: A call to action. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(24), 4941.
- Brooks, B., Trotta, D., & Goudsward, A. (2026, Jan 30). “Thousands demonstrate in Minnesota and across US to protest ICE.” *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/nationwide-protests-walkouts-planned-over-fatal-ice-shootings-minneapolis-2026-01-30/>
- Buehler, E.D. (2024). *State and local law enforcement training academies, 2022-Statistical tables*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/slletar22st.pdf>
- Buehler, E. D. (2021). *State and local law enforcement training academies, 2018-Statistical tables*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/slleta18st.pdf>
- Collinson, S. (2026, January 16). “Minneapolis is becoming a critical testing ground for Trump’s strongman project. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/16/politics/trump-insurrection-act-ice-minnesota-lawsuit-analysis>
- COPS Office (2025a). *2025 Safer Outcomes: Enhancing De-escalation and Crisis Response Training for Law Enforcement Program Awards*. https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2025AwardDocs/saferoutcomes/award_list.pdf
- COPS Office. (2025b). *Award #15JCOPS25GK00003DEU*. Washington, D.C.: COPS Office. <https://www.highergov.com/grant/15JCOPS25GK00003DEU/>

- COPS Office. (2024). *Department of Justice Awards More than \$15 Million for De-escalation and Crisis Response Training for Law Enforcement*. Washington, D.C.: COPS Office. https://cops.usdoj.gov/DOJ_awards_more_than_15_million_for_de_escalation_and_crisis_response_training
- COPS Office (n.d.). Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center. Washington, D.C.: COPS Office. Accessed January 19, 2026, <https://cops.usdoj.gov/collaborativereform>.
- Council on Criminal Justice. (2021a). *Effectiveness of Police Training: Policy Assessment*. <https://policing.council-oncj.org/assessing-the-evidence/iv-effectiveness-of-police-training>
- Council on Criminal Justice. (2021b). *Chokeholds and other neck restraints: Policy assessment*. https://assets.foleon.com/eu-west-2/uploads-7e3kk3/41697/pdf_-_chokeholds.d78d7aa1fada.pdf.
- Council on Criminal Justice. (2021c). *Duty to intervene: Policy assessment*. https://assets.foleon.com/eu-west-2/uploads-7e3kk3/41697/pdf_-_duty_to_intervene.6e39a04b07b6.pdf
- Council on Criminal Justice. (2021d). *No-knock warrants and police raids: Policy assessment*. https://assets.foleon.com/eu-west-2/uploads-7e3kk3/41697/pdf_-_no_knock_warrants.afc61934d317.pdf.
- Council on Criminal Justice. (2021e). *De-escalation policies and training: Policy assessment*. https://assets.foleon.com/eu-west-2/uploads-7e3kk3/41697/de-escalation_training.9f4b662e97c2.pdf.
- Cox, E., Tarrant, K., & Swenson, K. (2025, Aug 11). Signs of Trump’s takeover of D.C. policing are in view, with more to come. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/08/11/trump-dc-fbi-national-guard-deployment/>
- Craft, W., & Witherspoon, A. (2026, January 9). *By the numbers: The latest ICE and CBP data on arrests, detentions and deportations in the US*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/aug/29/trump-immigration-ice-cbp-data>
- Czopek, M., & Ramirez Uribe, M. (2026, January 12). *Fact-checking Sen. Mark Warner that Trump shortened ICE agent training to 47 days*. *PolitiFact*. <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2026/jan/12/mark-warner/ice-training-requirements-trump-minneapolis/>
- Davies, G., & Dawson, S. E. (2025). Contextualizing and defining de-escalation in policing. *Police Practice and Research*, 26(1), 19–38.
- Davis, K. (2016). Editorial: PERF and its questionable principles. *Officer.com*. <https://www.officer.com/investigations/article/12174475/perf-and-their-questionable-principles>
- Department of Homeland Security. (2026, January 3). *ICE announces historic 120% manpower increase, thanks to recruitment campaign that brought in 12,000 officers and agents*. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2026/01/03/ice-announces-historic-120-manpower-increase-thanks-recruitment-campaign-brought>
- Department of Homeland Security (2023). *Update to the Department Policy on the Use of Force Policy 044-05*. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/23_0206_s1_use-of-force-policy-update.pdf
- Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. (2024). *Summary of unannounced inspections of ICE facilities conducted in fiscal years 2020–2023 (OIG-24-59)*. <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2024-09/OIG-24-59-Sep24.pdf>
- Dube, O., MacArthur, S. J., & Shah, A. K. (2025). A cognitive view of policing. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 140(1), 745–791.
- Dziejma, S. & De Sousa, D. (2017). National Consensus Policy on use of force: How 11 leading enforcement leadership and labor organizations arrived at one policy. *The Police Chief*.

- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Isaza, G. T., & McManus, H. D. (2020b). *Examining the Impact of Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) De-escalation Training for the Louisville Metro Police Department: Initial Findings Report*. Submitted to Louisville Metro Police Department and Arnold Ventures.
- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Isaza, G. T., & Motz, R. (2021). *Examining the impact of Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) de-escalation training for the Louisville Metro Police Department: Supplemental findings*. IACP/UC Center for Police Research and Policy.
- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Isaza, G. T., & McManus, H. D. (2022a). Assessing the impact of de-escalation training on police behavior: Reducing police use of force in the Louisville, KY Metro Police Department. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12574>
- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Motz, R., & Cherkauskas, J. (2025a). *Evaluation of Integrating Communications, Assessments and Tactics (ICAT) De-escalation Training with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD)*. Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice.
- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Motz, R., & Cherkauskas, J. (2025b). *Evaluation of De-escalation through Tactical Communication (DTC) Training with the Cincinnati (OH) Police Department*. Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice.
- Engel, R. S., Corsaro, N., Cherkauskas, J., & Motz, R. (2025c). *Examining the Use of Police De-escalation Tactics in the Field: Oklahoma City, OK Police Department (OKCPD) Case Study*. Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice.
- Engel, R. S., Isaza, G. T., Motz, R., McManus, H. D., & Corsaro, N. (2022b). De-escalation training receptivity and first-line police supervision: Findings from the Louisville Metro Police Study. *Police Quarterly*, 25(2), 201-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F109861112111049834>
- Engel, R. S., McManus, H. D., & Herold, T. D. (2020a). Does de-escalation training work? A systematic review and call for evidence in police use of force reform. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19, 721-759.
- Engel, R. S., & Peterson, S. (2013). Leading by example: the untapped resource of front-line police supervisors. In *The future of policing* (pp. 398-413). Routledge.
- Engel, R. S., & Worden, R. E. (2003). Police officers' attitudes, behavior, and supervisory influences: An analysis of problem solving. *Criminology*, 41(1), 131-166.
- Engelbrecht, H., Lindeman, R. W. & Hoermann, S. A SWOT Analysis of the Field of Virtual Reality for Firefighter Training. *Front. Robot. AI* 6, 101 (2019).
- Fairburn, R. (2016, May 7). PERF's UOF report illustrates disconnect between street cops, administrators. *Police1*. <https://www.police1.com/use-of-force/articles/perfs-uof-report-illustrates-disconnect-between-street-cops-administrators-k15J8s92bri5weQU/>
- Farrington, D. P. (2003). Methodological quality standards for evaluation research. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 587(1), 49-68.
- Ferdik, F. V., Kaminski, R. J., Cooney, M. D., & Sevigny, E. L. (2014). The influence of agency policies on conducted energy device use and police use of lethal force. *Police Quarterly*, 17, 328-358.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Prentice Hall.
- Fyfe, J. J. (1979). Administrative interventions on police shooting discretion: An empirical examination. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 7(4), 309-323.
- Fyfe, J. J. (1982). Blind justice. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 73, 707-722.

- Gardner, A. M., & Scott, K. M. (2022). *Census of state and local law enforcement agencies, 2018–statistical tables*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cslea18st.pdf>
- Garner, J. H., Hickman, M. J., Malega, R. W., & Maxwell, C. D. (2018). Progress toward national estimates of police use of force. *PLoS one*, *13*(2), e0192932.
- Geller, W. A., & Scott, M. (1992). *Deadly force: What we know: A practitioner's desk reference on police-involved shootings*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.
- Government Accountability Office. (2024). *Restrictive housing: Actions needed to enhance BOP and ICE management and oversight* (GAO-24-107494). <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-107494>
- Giacomantonio, C., Goodwin, S., & Carmichael, G. (2019). Learning to de-escalate: evaluating the behavioural impact of Verbal Judo training on police constables. *Police Practice and Research*, *21*(4), 401–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2019.1589472>
- Goh, L. S. (2021). Did de-escalation successfully reduce serious use of force in Camden County, New Jersey? A synthetic control analysis of force outcomes. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *20*(2), 207–241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12536>
- Hennessy-Fiske, M., & Berman, M. (2026, Feb 1). “The Minneapolis police chief tried to repair his force. Can it survive ICE?” *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/02/01/minneapolis-police-chief-ice-surge-reforms/>
- Hollingsworth, J. (2026, Jan 22). “Thousands of new ICE agents are on patrol. Are they sufficiently trained.” *The Minnesota Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/thousands-of-new-ice-agents-are-on-patrol-are-they-sufficiently-trained/601565505>
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2025). *Enforcement and Removal Operations statistics*. <https://www.ice.gov/statistics>
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) (2017). *National Consensus Policy and discussion paper on use of force*. Retrieved from <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/national-consensus-discussion-paper-on-use-of-force-and-consensus-policy>
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) (2020). *National Consensus Policy and discussion paper on use of force*. Retrieved from <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/national-consensus-discussion-paper-on-use-of-force-and-consensus-policy>
- Isaza, G.T., Engel, R.S., & Motz, R.T. (2024). *Evaluation of Applied De-Escalation Tactics Train-the-Trainer Program for the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC)*. Washington, D.C.: COPS Office. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/content.ashx/cops-r1161-pub.pdf>
- Isaza, G. T., Engel, R. S., McManus, H. D., & Corsaro, N. (2019). Evaluation of police use of force de-escalation training: Assessing the impact of the Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training program for the University of Cincinnati, OH Police Division (UCPD). *Center for Police Research and Policy, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati*. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/UCPD_ICAT%20Evaluation_Final.pdf
- Isaza, G. T., Motz, R. T., McManus, H. D., & Corsaro, N. (2025). Examining the impacts of state-wide reform on police attitudes and perceptions in New Jersey. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, *19*, paaf003.

- Jackman, T. (2016b, Mar 31). Protocol for reducing police shootings draws backlash from unions, chiefs group. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/move-to-reduce-police-shootings-draws-sharp-backlash-from-unions-chiefs-group/2016/03/30/03c81e6a-ec55-11e5-bc08-3e03a5b41910_story.html
- Jackman, T. (2016a, Oct 15). De-escalation training to reduce police shootings facing mixed reviews at launch. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/de-escalation-training-to-reduce-police-shootings-facing-mixed-reviews-at-launch/2016/10/14/d6d96c74-9159-11e6-9c85-ac42097b8cc0_story.html
- Jennings, J. T., & Rubado, M. E. (2017). Preventing the use of deadly force: The relationship between police agency policies and rates of officer-involved gun deaths. *Public Administration Review*, 77(2), 217-226.
- Johnston, C. W., & Cheurprakobkit, S. (2002). Educating our police: Perceptions of police administrators regarding the utility of a college education, police academy training and preferences in courses for officers. *Int'l J. Police Sci. & Mgmt.*, 4, 182-197.
- Katz, E. (2026, January 5). *ICE more than doubled its workforce in 2025*. *Government Executive*. <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2026/01/ice-more-doubled-its-workforce-2025/410461/>
- Kittel, A., Lindsay, R., Le Noury, P., & Wilkins, L. (2024). The use of extended reality technologies in sport perceptual-cognitive skill research: A systematic scoping review. *Sports Medicine-Open*, 10(1), 128.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2015) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 5th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Lauer, C. (2026, Jan 15). As immigration agents police Minneapolis protests, experts warn of training gaps and the rising risk. *ABC News*. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/immigration-agents-police-minneapolis-protests-experts-warn-training-129255700>
- Lavoie, J., Álvarez, N., Baker, V., & Kohl, J. (2023). Training police to de-escalate mental health crisis situations: Comparing virtual reality and live-action scenario-based approaches. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 17, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paad069>
- Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-325, 136 Stat. 4451 (2022). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4003>
- Lexipol (2025). *Use of Force Master Policy*. <https://info.lexipol.com/National-Use-of-Force-Policy>
- Londono, E. & Robertson, C. (2026, Feb 4). "Federal Crackdown Means Another Repair Job for the Minneapolis Police Chief." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/04/us/brian-ohara-minneapolis-police.html>
- Lum, C.M., Koper, C.S., Gill, C., Hibdon, J., Telep, C., & Robinson, L. (2016). *An evidence-assessment of the recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing: Implementation and research priorities*. Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police.
- MacIsaac, A., Baldwin, S., Semple, T., & Bennell, C. (2025). Exploring the relationship between officer safety and De-escalation in a simulated crisis encounter. *Police Quarterly*, 28(3), 371-399.
- Maddalon, L., Minissi, M. E., Parsons, T., Hervas, A., & Alcaniz, M. (2024). Exploring adaptive virtual reality systems used in interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder: systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 26, e57093.

- Marion, N. (1998). Police academy training: are we teaching recruits what they need to know?. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 21(1), 54-79.
- Martaindale, M. H., Sandel, W. L., Duron, A., & McAllister, M. J. (2024). Can a virtual reality training scenario elicit similar stress response as a realistic scenario-based training scenario?. *Police Quarterly*, 27(1), 109-129.
- Marteau, T. M., Hollands, G. J., & Fletcher, P. C. (2012). Changing human behavior to prevent disease: The importance of targeting automatic processes. *Science*, 337(6101), 1492-1495. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1226918>
- McCraty, R., & Atkinson, M. (2012). Resilience training program reduces physiological and psychological stress in police officers. *Global advances in health and medicine*, 1(5), 44-66.
- McLean, K., Bussey, T., Nix, J., Rojek, J., & Alpert, G. P. (2025). Police de-escalation training and its effects on communication: Evidence from an experimental evaluation. *CrimRxiv*. <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.fe9287ce>
- McLean, K., Wolfe, S. E., Rojek, J., Alpert, G. P., & Smith, M. R. (2020). Randomized controlled trial of social interaction police training. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 19(3), 805-832.
- Meyer, J. (2026, Jan 10). Trump killed DOJ ‘peacemaker’ unit used to defuse tense protests. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/01/10/trump-killed-doj-unit-defusing-police-protest-tension/88105741007/>
- Morabito, E. V., & Doerner, W. G. (1997). Police use of less-than-lethal force: oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 20(4), 680-697.
- Mugford, R., Corey, S., & Bennell, C. (2013). Improving police training from a cognitive load perspective. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 36(2), 312-337.
- National Conference of State Legislatures. (2024). *Law Enforcement Training*. <https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/law-enforcement-training>
- National Policing Institute (n.d.). *Developing a Standards-Based Approval Process for Law Enforcement De-escalation Training*. <https://www.policinginstitute.org/projects/developing-a-standards-based-approval-process-for-law-enforcement-de-escalation-training/>
- National Research Council. (2004). *Fairness and effectiveness in policing: The evidence*. Washington, D.C: National Academies Press.
- Oliva, J. R., Morgan, R., & Compton, M. T. (2010). A practical overview of de-escalation skills in law enforcement: Helping individuals in crisis while reducing police liability and injury. *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations*, 10(1-2), 15-29.
- O’Neill, J., O’Neill, D. A., Weed, K., Hartman, M. E., Spence, W., & Lewinski, W. J. (2019). Police academy training, performance, and learning. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 12(2), 353-372.
- Owens, E., Weisburd, D., Amendola, K. L., & Alpert, G. P. (2018). Can you build a better cop? Experimental evidence on supervision, training, and policing in the community. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17(1), 41-87.
- Police Executive Research Forum. (2026). ICAT at 10—A decade of saving lives and careers and improving policing. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum. <https://www.policeforum.org/trending14feb26>
- Police Executive Research Forum. (2023). *Implementing the ICAT Training Program at Your Agency*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ICATImplementation.pdf>

- Police Executive Research Forum (2022). *Transforming Police Recruit Training: 40 Guiding Principles*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/TransformingRecruit-Training.pdf>
- Police Executive Research Forum. (2021). *What Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Need to Know about Collecting and Analyzing Use-of-Force Data*. PERF: Washington, D.C. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/CollectingAnalyzingUOFData.pdf>
- Police Executive Research Forum. (2016). *30 Guiding Principles on Use of Force*. PERF: Washington, D.C. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/30%20guiding%20principles.pdf>
- Police Executive Research Forum (2015). *Re-Engineering training on police use of force: Critical Issues in Policing Series*. PERF: Washington, D.C. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/reengineeringtraining1.pdf>
- President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. (2015). *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, D.C.: Office for Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-J36-PURL-gpo64136/pdf/GOVPUB-J36-PURL-gpo64136.pdf>
- Radzius, D. (2026, January 6). *ICE hiring surge triggers Capitol Hill concerns over training standards*. Military.com. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/headlines/2026/01/06/ice-hiring-surge-triggers-oversight-concerns-over-training-standards.html>
- Ranalli, M. (2025). *De-escalation: A Commonsense Approach*. Gold River, CA: Lexipol. [one.lexipol.com/l/1088082/2025-09-12/f5kc6x/1088082/1757717711pyeHjFeu/Lexipol_White_Paper___De_Escalation___A_Commonsense_Approach.pdf](https://www.lexipol.com/l/1088082/2025-09-12/f5kc6x/1088082/1757717711pyeHjFeu/Lexipol_White_Paper___De_Escalation___A_Commonsense_Approach.pdf)
- Ratcliffe, J. H. (2023). *Evidence-based policing: The basics*. Routledge.
- Sheeran, P. (2002). Intention-behavior relations: A conceptual and empirical review. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 12(1), 1-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792772143000003>
- Sherman, L. W. (2013). The rise of evidence-based policing: Targeting, testing, and tracking. *Crime and Justice*, 42(1), 377-451.
- Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D. C., MacKenzie, D. L., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. D. (1998). *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising*. Research in Brief. National Institute of Justice.
- Shjarback, J. A., White, M. D., & Bishopp, S. A. (2021). Can police shootings be reduced by requiring officers to document when they point firearms at citizens?. *Injury Prevention*, 27(6), 508-513.
- Sloan, J. J., Paoline, E. A., & Nobles, M. R. (2025). The more things change, the more they stay the same: A multi-wave national assessment of police academy training curricula. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 24(3), 333-361.
- Sloan III, J. J., & Paoline III, E. A. (2022). A national comparison of police academies operated by academic institutions and by law enforcement agencies: Different strokes for different folks?. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 33(4), 467-490.
- Sloan III, J. J., & Paoline III, E. A. (2021). “They need more training!” A national level analysis of police academy basic training priorities. *Police Quarterly*, 24(4), 486-518.
- Smith, M. (2026, Jan 12). Minnesota and Illinois Sue Trump Administration Over ICE Deployments. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/12/us/minnesota-llinois-lawsuit-ice-trump-administration.html>
- Smith, M. R. (2022). Reimagining the use of force by police in a post-Floyd nation. *Police Quarterly*, 25(2), 228-251.
- Steele, M. J., Lynn, T. J., Hayes, A. A., & Augustine, L. (2025). Enhancing Law Enforcement Skills: A 2-Year Report on Level 3 De-Escalation Training From the National De-Escalation Training Center. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 00938548251353749.

- Stoughton, S. (2014). Law enforcement's "warrior" problem. *Harvard Law Review*, *128*, 225-232.
- Terrill, W., & Paoline, E. A. (2017). Police use of less lethal force: Does administrative policy matter? *Justice Quarterly*, *34*(2), 193-216.
- Terrill, W., & Zimmerman, L. (2022). Police use of force escalation and de-escalation: The use of systematic social observation with video footage. *Police Quarterly*, *25*(2), 155-177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111211049145>
- Terrill, W., Zimmerman, L., & Somers, L. J. (2023). Applying video-based systematic social observation to police use of force encounters: An assessment of de-escalation and escalation within the context of proportionality and incrementalism. *Justice Quarterly*, *40*(7), 1045-1076. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2023.2222819>
- Todak, N., & James, L. (2018). A systematic social observation study of police de-escalation tactics. *Police Quarterly*, *21*(4), 509-543. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611118784007>
- Todak, N., & White, M. D. (2019). Expert officer perceptions of de-escalation in policing. *Policing: An International Journal*, *42*(5), 832-846.
- University of Virginia Center for Public Safety and Justice. (2025). *Informing Law Enforcement De-escalation Training: A Report on Stakeholder Feedback*. White paper report submitted to the Joyce Foundation.
- van Lith, L., Hutter, R. I., Sexton, M. M., Vandeviver, C., Schoonmade, L. J., & Lindegaard, M. R. (2025). What Do We Mean by De-Escalation in Police-Citizen Encounters? A Scoping Review on Conceptualization, Techniques, and Effectiveness. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 1-20.
- Vodde, R. F. (2012). Changing paradigms in police training: Transitioning from a traditional to an andragogical model. In *Police organization and training: Innovations in research and practice* (pp. 27-44). New York, NY: Springer New York.
- Vyas, S., Dwivedi, S., Brenner, L. J., Pedron, I., Gabbard, J. L., Krishnamurthy, V. R., & Mehta, R. K. (2024). Adaptive training on basic AR interactions: Bi-variate metrics and neuroergonomic evaluation paradigms. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, *40*(20), 6252-6267.
- Webb, T. L., & Sheeran, P. (2006). Does changing behavioral intentions engender behavior change? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*(2), 249-268. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.2.249>
- White, M. D., Mora, V., & Orosco, C. (2021a). Exploring variation in police perceptions of de-escalation: Do officer characteristics matter?. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, *15*(2), 727-740.
- White, M.D., Mora, V. J., Orosco, C., & Hedberg, E. C. (2021). Moving the needle: can training alter officer perceptions and use of de-escalation?. *Policing: An International Journal*, *44*(3), 418-436.
- White, M. D., Orosco, C., & Watts, S. (2025). Can police de-escalation training reduce use of force and citizen injury without compromising officer safety?. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, *21*(1), 45-70.
- White, M. D., Orosco, C., & Watts, S. (2023). Beyond force & injuries: Examining alternative and important outcomes for police de-escalation training. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *89*, 102129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2023.102129>
- Zaiser, B., Staller, M. S., & Koerner, S. (2023). Barriers to Effective De-escalation. In *Police Conflict Management, Volume I: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century* (pp. 195-222). Cham: Springer International Publishing.