

The C.A.L.M. Approach, "Comprehensive De-escalation" at a Time it is Needed Most

In policing, there are numerous high-profile, controversial uses of force involving people in crisis, many of which have led to severe injuries or even death. One of the most recent examples is the murder of Mr. George Floyd, arrested for a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. As a result, of Mr. Floyd's death, the entire country erupted in many weeks of violence. Unfortunately, another similar event would most likely produce worse outcomes.

In the aftermath of these tragic events, communities and police departments need healing, unity, and trust-building. In addition, police agencies and communities are looking for comprehensive solutions to improve public safety responses.

Police typically use force in less than 1% of all community contacts. But when higher levels of force are used involving people in crisis, or when the threat level is low, and injuries or death occur, the legitimacy of policing is called into question. There is no doubt policing can be extremely dangerous, and officers deal with numerous complex challenges. However, training should evolve to address these challenges and concerns.

Traditional "verbal" de-escalation training is designed for the on-set of an encounter and does not provide comprehensive direction if or when it fails. In addition, current training concepts do not address officers' emotions, which is a critical element for a successful outcome.

In direct response to these current challenges facing law enforcement, Con10gency president and retired police officer of 27 years, Rick Smith, brought together subject matter experts to develop the C.A.L.M. Approach™. Under his guidance, they created a comprehensive response matrix for law enforcement professionals to use with a non-compliant subject(s) who do not exhibit a weapon.

The C.A.L.M. methodology underscores the need to avoid physical confrontation whenever possible; however, should such confrontations be unavoidable, this concept provides critical direction to increase the safety of everyone involved, including the subject(s). It also introduces a new position, Lateral Recovery Restraint™, designed by Con10gency's law enforcement and medical experts to reduce injury or death of subject(s).

The C.A.L.M. Approach incorporates four basic principles that serve as essential tools for a progressive law enforcement agency:

- **Communication**
- **Active Physical Control Maneuvers**
- **Lateral Recovery Restraint**
- **Monitor**

The C.A.L.M. Approach emphasizes decreasing emotionality (on both sides of the conversation) and increasing rationality, teaches verbal and nonverbal skills to reduce agitation, seeks to develop rapport by engaging in empathetic, active listening from initial contact to the end of the police encounter.

The C.A.L.M Approach is a deliberate attempt to prevent or reduce the amount of force necessary to resolve a confrontation by using time, talk, and tactics to produce safer outcomes

for all involved. However, if physical force is unavoidable, C.A.L.M. provides active physical control methods with medical monitoring that reduces injuries or death.

C.A.L.M. stresses efforts at persuasion and influence to gain a subject's cooperation, which increases safety and effectiveness, whenever possible, to de-escalation throughout the entire encounter.

The C.A.L.M. Approach is timely as communities are now demanding law enforcement agencies embrace actual de-escalation, reduce the need to use force, and gain voluntary cooperation when possible.

Recent academic literature finds that proper de-escalation training programs can reduce officer and community member injuries and reduce the use of force.

The C.A.L.M. Approach has recently been awarded National Certification by the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training. [I.A.D.L.E.S.T. National Certification Program \(NCP\) | Home \(iadlest-ncp.org\)](#) National Certification Program.

The National Certification Program (NCP) establishes law enforcement training standards and "best practices" relating to improved professionalism and skillsets for our nations' first responders. NCP courses are recognized nationally and designed to count towards officers' mandatory in-service training requirements.

About the Author:

Commander Robert King retired from the Portland Police Bureau after serving 30 years. After his retirement, he worked as the Portland Public Safety Advisor to Mayor Wheeler during the tumultuous summer-long demonstrations of 2020. This last summer, he joined Con10gency Consulting as their National Director of Training.