



1. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to emphasize positive interactions between employees and youth and to provide information regarding youth vulnerabilities and developmental stages. Interactions should be conducted with dignity, respect, impartiality and trustworthy motives. Fostering appropriate engagement strategies may increase effectiveness in youth-related situations which align with Department values (see Operations Order 1.1.00, Purpose Statement/Guiding Values).
- B. The Department is committed to fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and youth. The goal is to build trust, enhance mutual understanding, and create a foundation for productive community partnerships.
- C. Employees have a unique opportunity to serve as a role model and mentor for youth within the community. Positive interactions between employees and young people are essential to shaping their perceptions of the justice system and building long-term trust.
- D. The Department acknowledges that the safety, security and wellbeing of youth is vital, however this policy does not take precedence over safety priorities.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. As required in Operations Order 1.3.00, Standards of Public Trust, employees will treat youth in a manner that recognizes the dignity of all persons, fostering public trust and police legitimacy.
 - (1) Employees will treat youth with dignity and respect regardless of their circumstances.
 - (2) Youth will be given the opportunity to share their thoughts and be heard by employees, whenever possible.
 - (3) Employees will use neutral and transparent decision-making as well as provide explanations for actions when time and circumstances allow.

3. DEFINITIONS

A. Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual who is under 18 years of age and whose youth status is objectively apparent to a reasonable person.
B. Juvenile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A term more formally used in legal or criminal justice settings to refer to individuals under the age of 18, who are not considered adults by law.
C. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities, guaranteeing people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just as other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination by law enforcement agencies, because they are entities of state or local government.
D. Consensual Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary interaction with a person where a reasonable person would clearly understand they are free to leave or decline the officer's request.
E. Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
F. Behavioral Health Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An event or experience in which an individual's normal coping mechanisms are overwhelmed, causing them to have an extreme emotional, physical, mental, and/or behavioral response.

3. **DEFINITIONS** (continued)

G. Mobile Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mobile unit made up of crisis response specialists that are trained to respond to individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. A mobile team can either be a Phoenix Department Community Assistance Program (CAP) Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) or a county crisis team operated by Terros, EMPACT, CBI or Spectrum.
H. Parent/Guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The youth's biological or adoptive parent, guardian or legal custodian.
I. Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A result of an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

4. **INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

- A. Youth are developmentally different from adults and employees should be mindful of this when interacting with youth and performing law enforcement activities.
- B. Youth experience a variety of physical and cognitive changes as they grow. Brain functioning that controls impulses, calms emotions, provides an understanding of the consequences of behavior, and allows for rational decision-making is not fully developed until adulthood.

5. **CONSIDERATIONS WHEN INTERACTING WITH YOUTH**

- A. Employees should consider the following factors, which can influence interactions:
- Age, intelligence, developmental capacity and physical condition
 - Mental capacity or disability status of the youth, including whether the youth is in an apparent mental behavioral health crisis or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or has failed to take medication
 - risk-taking behaviors
 - limited capacity for self-regulation
 - limited capacity to anticipate consequences accurately
 - limited impulse control
 - susceptibility to manipulation
 - heightened sensitivity to peer influence
 - prioritization of immediate rewards
 - reactive responses to authority figures, ranging from feeling coerced to active resistance
 - Youth may be confused, stressed, or fearful during an interaction with law enforcement – even if the youth does not express these feelings or appear to be experiencing them
 - The impact of the mere presence of a uniformed employee may cause stress for the youth
- B. Many youths have experienced trauma, and this should be taken into consideration whenever possible. Youth who have been exposed to trauma may:
- Perceive authority figures as a threat
 - Respond to a perceived threat by acting to protect themselves by;
 - Adopting combative stances, including lashing out verbally
 - Fleeing or otherwise avoiding an interaction
 - Freezing, and therefore being unable to follow orders
 - Displaying escalated responses because of their perception of being physically overpowered or cornered



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6. COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

A. These communication techniques may be applied in all situations. When objectively reasonable, the following communication strategies may be used during interactions with youth:

- (1) When approaching youth, prioritize trust and rapport. Remember youth may be sensitive to verbal and nonverbal cues and can react differently than adults.
- (2) Allow a reasonable amount of time for the youth to explain and ask questions.
- (3) Be aware that unwarranted criticism can negatively impact the conversation.
- (4) Keep communication simple and assess for understanding.

NOTE: For additional guidance regarding youth as suspects in a crime or status offense, runaways or foster/shelter placements, refer to Operations Order 7.8.00, Juvenile Procedures.

7. RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS WHERE YOUTH NEED PROTECTION

A. When employees are responding to calls where trauma may occur (e.g., Domestic Violence, Search or Arrest Warrants, Abuse or Neglect of a child, etc.) and when possible and safe to do so, they should prioritize removing the youth from the traumatic incident if practical.

B. When practical, employees should ask and look for signs (e.g., toys, diapers, playpens, highchairs, cribs, youth clothing, etc.) of youth being on the premise.

- If present, officer should locate and account for the safety of youth.

C. Employees should consider separating youth from crime scenes or potential traumatic events.

- (1) Whenever possible, arrest or interview parents or caregivers away from their children.

D. Due to their vulnerability, youth may need to be comforted.

- (1) If safe to do so, employees may allow the parent or caregiver to explain to the youth what is happening and comfort the youth.

- (a) This can be considered even if the parent or caregiver is the individual who is in custody.

- Employees should use the communication techniques listed in Section 6 above and contact a mobile team to communicate with the youth.

8. USE OF RESTRAINTS OR HANDCUFFS

A. The Department recognizes that detaining or handcuffing youth may cause trauma. Employees should explain, in an appropriate and respectful manner considering the child's age, the use of handcuffs or restraints to youth whenever they are applied.

- (1) Employees will not use handcuffs or restraints on youth to intimidate or scare them.
- (2) Employees will not use handcuffs or restraints on youth when they are not under arrest or detained and/or do not pose a safety risk.
- (3) If a detained youth is found to have committed no offense, they must be immediately released and informed they are free to leave.



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- (4) When youth are under arrest, detained or pose a safety risk, employees should refer to Operations Order 7.7.00, Arrestees, for guidance on handcuffing.

9. **CONSENSUAL CONTACTS WITH YOUTH**

- A. Youth have the same constitutional rights as adults. However, not all youth may understand these rights or respond in a perceived appropriate manner.
 - (1) When conducting a consensual contact, employees should keep in mind that some youth may respond with hostility, verbal disrespect, silence, or attempt to leave. These behaviors do not necessarily indicate suspicious or criminal activity.
 - (2) During consensual contacts, officers should introduce themselves and explain in clear terms the reason for contact.
 - (3) During consensual contacts with youth, officers will advise them they can leave and if they choose to leave, let them.
 - (4) During a consensual contact with youth, if reasonable suspicion is determined, Operations Order 7.3.00, Initial Investigative Procedures and Operations Order 7.8.00, Juvenile Procedures apply.

10. **INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES WITH YOUTH**

- A. Prior to conducting an interview with a youth, if an employee determines a child sex crime or abuse has occurred, they should refer to the following policies for guidance, Operations Orders 7.17.00 Child Sex Crimes or 7.16.00, Child Abuse/Child Neglect/Contributing to the Delinquency.
- B. Youth are recognized as cognitively different than adults. When interviewing youth as a witness or victim, employees may use the following techniques as a guideline. Due to age, maturity, or known ability to comprehend, not all techniques may be appropriate and will be left to the employee's discretion:
 - (1) Setting: If possible, interviews should be conducted in a private, neutral setting with minimal distractions.
 - (2) Introduce and explain: Start by introducing yourself and explain the reason and importance of conducting an interview
 - (3) Building rapport: Building rapport may help youth feel comfortable engaging in an interview.
 - (4) Patience: Give youth time to answer questions. Considerations should be given to the nature of the investigation, their involvement, and the effect it may have on them.
- C. Youth may not understand their rights. Employees should take this into account when interviewing youth. (See Operations Order 7.8.00, Juvenile Procedures for guidance on Juvenile Miranda and interviewing youth)
 - (1) When interviewing youth in investigations where they are under arrest or detained, refer to Operations Order 7.3.00, Initial Investigative Procedures.

**11. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES**

- A. Visual indicators a youth may have a disability (as defined by the ADA) are:
- (1) Uses a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, or other mobility device, indicating a mobility impairment
 - (2) Uses a communications board or other augmentative or alternative communications device, indicating limited language communications skills
 - (3) Uses a cane for people who are blind, indicating a visual impairment
 - (4) Is observed to have a cochlear implant or to be conversing with a companion in sign language, indicating a hearing impairment
 - (5) Is accompanied by a service animal, indicating a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability
- B. Individuals with disabilities may require additional time to process information and communicate. Employees should attempt to avoid rushing the interaction if possible.
- C. Some youth with disabilities may view and react to law enforcement by:
- (1) Exhibiting self-stimulating behaviors (*i.e.*, covering ears or eyes, lying down, shaking or rocking, repeating questions, singing, humming, making noises, repeating actions, or repeating information).
 - (2) Inability to follow verbal commands:
 - Deaf individuals may walk away because they cannot hear.
 - Individuals with a disability may not be able to follow commands due to physical or intellectual limitations.
- D. In order to de-escalate interactions, employees may want to consider the following:
- (1) Eliminating sources of overstimulation, if possible (*e.g.*, sirens, flashing lights, crowds, etc.)
 - (2) Assessing the youth's behavior in context, recognizing that disability-related actions may not indicate criminal intent or guilt.
 - (3) Giving youth time to respond to instructions.
 - (4) Welcoming the participation of another adult (*i.e.*, parent, supporter, caregiver, or other responsible adult) who has an existing relationship with the youth
 - (5) If there is a service animal, employees should recognize that separating youth from their service animal may escalate the situation. If possible and safe to do so, employees should keep the animal with the youth or within sight.

NOTE: For more information on de-escalation techniques, refer to Operations Order 1.5.00, Use of Force.



12. **YOUTH IN CRISIS**

A. While recognizing youth in mental health crisis are not the same as youth who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, some behaviors may manifest in the same way. Indicators could be:

- Strong and persistent fear of persons, places, and things
- Extremely abnormal or inappropriate behavior
- Frustration with new or unanticipated circumstances
- Behavior associated with hallucinations
- Extreme confusion, fright, paranoia, or depression
- Feelings of invincibility
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Difficulty remaining conscious
- Slurred speech

B. When interacting with youth in crisis and/or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, employees should request a mobile team as soon as practicable.

NOTE: See Operations Order 1.3.02, Individuals with Mental or Physical Disabilities for more information



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