




# Columbia Police Department

## Informational Memo



TO: JOHN GLASCOCK, CITY MANAGER  
FROM: GEOFF JONES, CHIEF OF POLICE   
REF: RESPONSE TO CAMPAIGN ZERO ORDINANCES  
DATE: 06-09-20

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Mr. Glascock,

I received the email from one of our citizens referencing Campaign Zero, an effort to reduce police killings. I have reviewed the eight requests and have some feedback on each point. The email requests the following:

1) Ban officers in using chokeholds and neck restraints.

Strangle and Choke holds are currently prohibited by Columbia Police Department Policy 300.11.4. This policy states in part, "Choke, strangle or similar holds which restrict the flow of blood to the brain or the person's ability to breathe are prohibited except where the officer reasonably believes there is an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to him/herself or a third party and this action is the only reasonable means at the time to stop the threat."

The policy does allow for this type of hold to be applied when the level of reasonable force has reached the level of deadly force. In short, these holds are not to be used unless officers are intentionally applying deadly force.

There have been no deaths in Columbia as a result of a Columbia Police Officer applying a choke/strangle hold.

2) Restrict deadly force to be authorized only when strictly necessary to protect life after all other reasonable alternatives are exhausted, including the use of de-escalation and non-lethal force techniques.

The application of force is governed by Policy 300 Use of Force/Response to Resistance. Objective reasonableness must be the standard. The use of a force continuum in application will not be effective in reducing negative outcomes. The use of a force continuum in a training environment gives officers a sense of a starting and ending point in force applications while infusing sound judgment. In situations that do not pose an immediate threat, a step-through process might be more effective, but this is already the policy of the CPD. 300.6 states, "Officers shall use only that amount of force that appears reasonably necessary given the facts and circumstances at the time of the event to accomplish a lawful objective. The reasonableness of force will be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Given that no policy can realistically predict every possible situation an officer might



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encounter, Officers are entrusted to use well-reasoned discretion in determining the appropriate response to resistance in each incident. For situations that do not pose an immediate threat, officers are entrusted and encouraged to slow down the situation, take advantage of distance, cover, and tactical repositioning, and use de-escalation techniques to achieve a lawful objective whenever possible. Supervisory assistance should be requested as applicable. With the understanding that an officer can never know the actual nature of a threat or actual intent of another, the ultimate objective of every law enforcement encounter is to avoid or minimize injury. Nothing in this policy requires an officer to retreat or be exposed to possible physical injury before applying reasonable force.”

To expect officers to adhere to the standard of “strictly necessary” would require that an officer faced with an imminent threat have every piece of information available, process it and comprehend it before making a threat assessment and responding to a threat. This level of knowledge and insight is rarely if ever achievable in these types of situations and could not be adhered to by even the most educated, trained, and experience officers.

3) Require comprehensive reporting of incidents where officers use force.

Our officers document every use of force through the software program “BlueTeam”. This software requires comprehensive reporting and is the starting point for the internal review process that occurs with every use of force. This system also sends alerts to supervisors when there are repeated uses of force within a set time period, allowing for supervisors to have a second set of review. Every citizen contact should be recorded, by policy, with both audio and video which is also reviewed during the use of force review process.

Our policy 300.13 states, “A written report will be submitted any time an employee: a. Discharges a firearm, for other than training or recreational purposes (does not include the humane killing of an injured animal); b. Takes an action that results in, or is alleged to have resulted in, injury or death of another person; c. Applies force through the use of lethal or less lethal weapons; or d. Applies weaponless physical force at a level as defined by this agency. The report shall document completely and accurately the factors perceived at the time of the incident and why he/she believed the response to resistance was reasonable under the circumstances. The report should be completed, depending on the nature of the incident, prior to the end of shift unless the delay is authorized by a supervisor.” Also relevant is the BlueTeam entry portion of our policy, “A response to resistance entry containing information on the force used must be made through the Blue Team software. Information entered into the system should include: a. Race, gender, and age of the subject to which force was applied; b. Date, time, and location of the incident; c. Identity of all parties involved; d. Details of the incident including a summary of circumstances leading to the use of force/response to resistance; e. Documentation of all injuries; and f. Medical treatment provided. Blue Team entries are required for the following circumstances: a. Any circumstances related to response to resistance that requires supervisor notification. b. Use of a restraint chair. c. Any time an officer points a firearm at any person in response to the person’s physical or implied actions. d. When any amount of physical effort is used to compel compliance by an unwilling subject. e. Any discharge of a firearm on or off duty, for other than training or recreational purposes (does not include the humane killing of an injured animal). f. Any discharge of a less lethal weapon either at a person, animal or at an



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inanimate object for the purpose of breaching an entry.”

4) Require that officers intervene when another officer is using excessive force.

Our policy requires officers intervene when they are able and report these acts to a supervisor. Our policy 300.8 states, “Any officer present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. An officer who observes another employee use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.”

There have been no allegations of misconduct in regards to this policy.

5) Require Officers to de-escalate situations without force whenever possible.

I mentioned previously, the policy encourages officer to use de-escalation techniques when possible. This is a consideration when supervisors review the use of force. De-escalation is defined in our policy as, “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.”

Recently (within the last six months) I have requested the training staff, the policy staff, and the internal affairs staff meet regularly to discuss gaps in policy and training that could reduce the frequency and severity of use of force encounters. De-escalation is a topic discussed by this group.

6) Clearly define and limit the types of force that can be used for specific types of resistance.

Please see the points addressed in #2. A continuum is a valuable training tool, and can be used to help officers assess the levels of force needed. Ultimately, the use of force must be objectively reasonable. Training is a key factor when addressing this point.

7) Require officers to give a verbal warning, when possible, before using deadly force.

CPD Policy 300.10 requires a verbal warning, where feasible. The policy states, in part, “Use of deadly force is justified in the following circumstances: a. An officer may use deadly force to protect him/herself or others from what he/she reasonably believes would be an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury. b. An officer may use deadly force to stop a fleeing subject when the officer has probable cause to believe that the person has committed, or intends to commit, a felony involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious bodily injury or death, and the officer reasonably believes that there is an imminent risk of serious bodily injury or death to any other person if the subject is not immediately apprehended. Under such



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circumstances, a verbal warning should precede the use of deadly force, where feasible. Imminent does not mean immediate or instantaneous. An imminent danger may exist even if the suspect is not at that very moment pointing a weapon at someone. For example, an imminent danger may exist if an officer reasonably believes any of the following: 1. The person has a weapon or is attempting to access one and it is reasonable to believe the person intends to use it against the officer or another. 2. The person is capable of causing serious bodily injury or death without a weapon and it is reasonable to believe the person intends to do so.”

8) Prohibit officers from shooting at people in moving vehicles unless the person poses a deadly threat by means other than the vehicle, such as shooting from the vehicle.”

Our policy 300.11.2 states, “Shots fired at or from a moving vehicle are prohibited except where the officer reasonably believes there is an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to him/herself or a third party and this action is the only reasonable means at the time to stop the threat. Officers should not shoot at any part of a vehicle in an attempt to disable the vehicle unless deadly force is justified.”

I am not willing to take away a deadly force option to protect the life and safety of innocent bystanders and police officers. This policy prohibits firing into a vehicle unless the officer is intentionally applying deadly force.

I have attached our entire use of force policy. Our policy was vetted through the interested party meeting and is a working document; we are always willing to discuss policy and how it is applied. Force MUST be applied legitimately, when applied and we have a responsibility to those we serve to explain our safety priorities, our training, and our policies. This allows us to seek input and continue to improve our operational application of force.

As a side note, but related to the equitable and fair treatment of our citizens, we have considered (over the last two months) a position under Internal Affairs that reviews policy, training and application through an equity lens. I anticipate changes in all three areas as they evaluate the real-world application of force and other enforcement strategies.

Please contact me with further questions.

gjj/1349

attachments: Use of Force Policy 300