



Exploring De-escalation Training: Programs, Impact, and Resourcing

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New programs and funding sources are a rare opportunity for law enforcement agencies to collectively improve, make communities and officers safer, and set a new standard for smart, cost-effective community policing nationwide.

Executive Summary

In the past five years, tragic police-citizen interactions have led to increased community engagement, as citizens across the country rallied to protest police violence. In this changing environment, law enforcement agencies have begun experimenting with new types of de-escalation training with support from federal funding.

This paper explores the current landscape of de-escalation training in law enforcement, its uses and effectiveness, and the existing availability and impact of federal grants. We focus on understanding how funding has changed since 2020 and what opportunities exist to improve upon existing practices; assessing police perceptions of the grant process and efficacy of funding; and making recommendations on the types of de-escalation programs that should be made eligible for funding as the federal curriculum is developed. We identify barriers to de-escalation implementation and training funding in communities where it is most needed and make recommendations to improve awareness of and access to federal resources. The recommendations are intended to help reduce police use of force by ensuring federal funding streams are effective.

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Key Points:

1. Despite recent definition in federal legislation and prominence among law enforcement, de-escalation remains ambiguous in practice. Many variations of de-escalation training exist, which allows for customization to local issues. However, agencies across the country would benefit from a federal program to serve as a foundation for training and evaluation.
2. In recent years, law enforcement agencies have learned from crisis intervention teams and conflict resolution practitioners and created trainings for individual officers. Effective de-escalation training is a long-term investment in reducing the costs of the policing system and limiting government size and impact in the communities that law enforcement serves.
3. Federal resources for police de-escalation training have significantly increased since calls for policing system changes grew louder in 2020, yet law enforcement agencies still face barriers in accessing these resources. Fortunately, a new federal program currently being implemented seeks to alleviate many of these barriers, which will empower law enforcement to employ best-practice de-escalation training.



Introduction

De-escalation tactics are not a new concept. Good police officers have been successfully practicing de-escalation for decades, if not longer.¹ Yet formalized de-escalation training is relatively new and has gained considerable traction in response to recent nationwide calls for change. While some states had previously required some form of de-escalation training for officers, since 2020, several states—including Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia—have passed legislation regarding its use.²

To address the public's discontent with law enforcement, Republicans and Democrats have introduced legislation to make various changes to policing across the country. However, both the Republicans' Just and Unifying Solutions To Invigorate Communities Everywhere (JUSTICE) Act and the Democrats' George Floyd Justice in Policing Act ultimately failed to become law.³

A comprehensive federal compromise on policing was never reached, but demands for change continued, and quieter negotiations gave rise to support for de-escalation training.⁴ As a result, the president signed the bipartisan Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act (LEDTA) into law in 2022 to increase



Following failed federal compromise, the president signed the bipartisan Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act (LEDTA) into law in 2022 to increase access to de-escalation training for police officers.

1. Office of Public Affairs, "Justice Department Applauds Adoption of Police Department-Wide Tactical De-escalation Training Program in Seattle," Department of Justice, April 16, 2015. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-applauds-adoption-police-department-wide-tactical-de-escalation-training>.

2. "Policing Trends: New Use of Force and De-Escalation Training Mandates for Law Enforcement," Vector Solutions, Feb. 27, 2024. <https://www.vectorsolutions.com/resources/blogs/use-of-force-de-escalation-training-law-enforcement>.

3. S. 3985 - 116th Congress, "Just and Unifying Solutions to Invigorate Communities Everywhere (JUSTICE) Act," June 17, 2020. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3985>; H.R. 1280 - 117th Congress, "George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021," Feb. 24, 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1280>.

4. Dareh Gregorian and Leigh Ann Caldwell, "Bipartisan police reform legislation talks end without a deal, Sen. Booker says," NBC News, Sept. 23, 2021. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/bipartisan-police-reform-legislation-talks-end-without-deal-sen-booker-n1279880>.

access to de-escalation training for police officers. The law requires the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to develop curricula in the training topics, or identify existing curricula, authorizing \$124 million in grant funding over four years for training.⁵ The funding also supports scenario-based exercises and evaluative assessments, and the law requires the National Institute of Justice and the Government Accountability Office to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of training. While this legislation is not the first time federal funds have been used for de-escalation, it does seek to significantly improve the standards surrounding these practices and increases funding for these programs.

Consensus on De-escalation Training

In an earlier publication outlining some of the pressures faced by law enforcement in 2020, we dug into some of the causes of and resulting demands for policing system changes:⁶

Television, phone, and computer use dominated 2020 and 2021, and with that territory came, of course, the media presented so readily and rapidly to us. At the time, it showed scenes of social unrest, rage, and disappointment at a law enforcement system that seemed to finally be reaching a breaking point. Agencies needed to implement change themselves, or they would be made to by external forces.

Of the approximately 700,000 sworn officers in the United States, fewer than 20 percent are federal employees, which gives Congress limited authority over most law enforcement officers in the country.⁷ Most de-escalation policy occurs at the state and local level but with much needed support from federal resources, including: (1) mandated changes within state systems that have the necessary authority over such agencies and (2) federal legislation that takes the form of grant programs that state and local law enforcement agencies can utilize. However, passing reforms is not enough to ensure that system changes are impactful. The task of implementation, both on the programmatic and the funding sides, is critical to agencies and communities looking for meaningful change.

The strong call for police system changes largely came in response to excessive uses of force by law enforcement in scenarios where it was not warranted. Some of these incidents may have been avoided had de-escalation training been more ubiquitous. Therefore, this paper will explore some of the background and theories of de-escalation training, review the quality and impact of several types of de-escalation training programs for law enforcement, and make recommendations on the most important elements of successful training. We will then map out the landscape of federal funding available for de-escalation



Passing reforms is not enough to ensure that system changes are impactful. The task of implementation, both on the programmatic and the funding side, is critical to agencies and communities looking for meaningful change.

5. S. 4003 - 117th Congress, “Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022,” April 5, 2022. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4003>.
6. Sarah Anderson, “Policing Policy in Congress: An Overview Since 2020 and Consensus on De-escalation,” R Street Institute, April 2, 2024. <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/policing-policy-in-congress-an-overview-since-2020-and-consensus-on-de-escalation>.
7. Jillian Snider, “A New Era of American Policing,” *National Affairs* 60 (Fall 2023). <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/a-new-era-of-american-policing>.

training prior to the passage of LEDTA, discuss the technical assistance available to law enforcement agencies that wish to access those existing funds, and describe where LEDTA is in its implementation process and how to ensure it has maximal impact when resources become available. We also focus on the six states in the Great Lakes region, which were the center of many of the high-profile policing incidents of 2020, to understand what, if any, state-level changes were implemented around de-escalation training since 2020 and how these reforms affect law enforcement access to both state and federal resources to support successful de-escalation training.

Defining De-escalation

Despite the term's frequent use in policing policy, de-escalation lacks a universally accepted definition. While de-escalation tactics are generally supported by law enforcement leadership organizations, they are sometimes critically perceived as an effort to limit or control the authority to use force, which may increase the potential for officer injury or death. In general, de-escalation is grounded in three important principles: (1) understanding that the sanctity of all human life is at the core of the police mission; (2) recognizing that officers wield considerable discretion; and (3) acknowledging that police-citizen interactions are transactional.⁸ At the most fundamental level, 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. LEDTA supports this concept by defining de-escalation as:

taking action or communicating verbal[ly] 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.⁹

This viewpoint emphasizes preventive measures to defuse a volatile situation before it reaches a crisis point. Based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with police officers, researchers have defined specific tactics for de-escalating situations:¹⁰

- The “respect” tactic, which includes talking to a person in a respectful tone to aid in defusing a crisis.
- The “calm” tactic, which includes staying calm and attempting to keep one’s emotions in check in stressful situations.
- The “honesty” tactic, which includes being forthright with citizens about the facts of the case, the criminal justice system, and the officer’s authority.



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8. Michael D. White et al., “Exploring Variation in Police Perceptions of De-Escalation: Do Officer Characteristics Matter?,” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 15:2 (June 2021), pp. 727-740. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paz062>.

9. Ibid.

10. Natalie Erin Todak, “De-Escalation in Police-Citizen Encounters: A Mixed Methods Study of a Misunderstood Policing Strategy,” (Doctoral dissertation), Arizona State University, 2017. <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/155747>.

- The “shoes” tactic, which stresses the ability to “put yourself in the person’s shoes” to aid in increasing empathy.
- The “compromise” tactic, which, when possible, means utilizing officer discretion to reduce charges.
- The “listen” tactic, which means simply listening to the citizen’s side of things to let people know that they are being heard and to assist the officer in learning the potential source of the problem.
- The “human” tactic, which means recognizing that the interaction is happening between two equals and not between an officer and a suspect.
- The “empower” tactic, which means engaging citizens in the decision-making process and encouraging them to make better future decisions.



Another perspective views de-escalation as the process of moving a person from an imminent threat to complying with an arrest, emphasizing the reactive, fluid nature of situations police regularly encounter. This procedural perspective puts actions on a de-escalatory spectrum. One training sergeant from the New York Police Department (NYPD) describes de-escalation as “anything cops do to gain compliance without actually applying physical force.”¹¹ The ambiguity of the term allows for significant variance, even among officers within a single department. However, many practitioners in the nascent field of de-escalation view the diversity of definitions and practices as a feature rather than a problem. In other words, the ability to try out different approaches to see what works is an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to learn from their colleagues in other jurisdictions.¹²

One point of contention in the field is whether so-called “less-than-lethal” force (such as tasers or pepper spray) should be considered a form of de-escalation. There are some law enforcement professionals who prefer this broader interpretation, leaving room for any tactic that brings a dangerous situation to a peaceful resolution. However, this interpretation is contentious, as any force, no matter how “non-lethal” could be viewed as contrary to the spirit of de-escalation. For example, the public usually associates de-escalation with a complete avoidance of physical confrontation and the use of non-violent techniques to resolve conflicts.¹³ This expectation can clash with the more tactical and varied interpretations held by some law enforcement professionals. To be as inclusive as possible, for the purposes of this paper, de-escalation refers to techniques and training that use less-than-lethal force and are intended to turn a dangerous situation into a safe situation.



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11. Jillian Snider interview with Mary Carter (in-person), May 16, 2024.

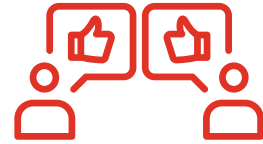
12. Richard Hahn, “Police de-escalation tactics can lead to meaningful improvements in officer and civilian safety,” Niskanen Center, July 12, 2023. <https://www.niskanencenter.org/police-de-escalation-tactics-can-lead-to-meaningful-improvements-in-officer-and-civilian-safety>.

13. Gabrielle T. Isaza et al., “Evaluation of Police Use of Force De-escalation Training: Assessing the Impact of the *Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics* (ICAT) Training Program,” University of Cincinnati Center for Police Research and Policy, December 2019. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/UCPD_ICAT%20Evaluation_Final.pdf.

Examples of Tactics and Programs

Conflict Resolution

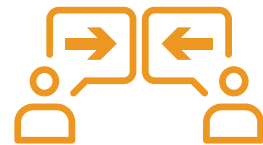
De-escalation requires police officers with good judgment, situational awareness, and the ability to assume personal risk. It also requires an understanding of conflict resolution techniques, such as negotiation and mediation, to address the underlying drivers of conflict. This approach relies heavily on communication and active listening, ensuring that everyone feels heard and understood. In addition to the words being spoken, officers must also pay attention to non-verbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice. This is not a groundbreaking or even new approach to policing. For at least the past century, effective officers have been employing conflict resolution skills to resolve situations safely and thereby reducing the need for use of force. This approach also demonstrates a commitment to avoiding force unless absolutely necessary. This not only makes officers safer, but it can also enhance community trust and cooperation, as residents begin to see law enforcement as partners in maintaining the peace and resolving disputes. It is worth noting that de-escalatory conflict resolution requires a certain level of cooperation. Even the best trained, most skillful officer can only set the conditions for de-escalation and help provide motivation for people to de-escalate themselves.



The conflict resolution approach relies heavily on communication and active listening, ensuring that everyone feels heard and understood.

Verbal Judo

Modern de-escalation training also relies on the concept of “verbal judo,” which was developed by an eccentric Princeton English professor named George J. Thompson. In 1983, Thompson left his prestigious academic career and decided to become an officer. Already a black belt in physical judo, Thompson discovered that a form of rhetorical judo was equally—if not more—valuable as a police officer. Using some basic rhetorical techniques, Thompson was able to gain compliance through non-violent means.¹⁴ The term “judo” means “the gentle way,” reflecting the philosophy of using words to redirect aggression and maintain control without resorting to force. At the heart of this technique is a deep empathy—officers are trained to listen actively and show respect, which helps to defuse anger and reduce resistance by making individuals feel valued. Verbal judo teaches officers to deflect hostile comments and redirect the conversation in a more constructive direction. This involves acknowledging the other person’s feelings without agreeing or disagreeing with their statements, thereby preventing the escalation of conflict. The ultimate goal of verbal judo is to persuade individuals to comply with lawful orders voluntarily. This involves explaining the reasoning behind requests and the consequences of non-compliance in a calm manner. For instance, an officer might explain, “I need you to step back for your safety and mine. If you don’t, I may have to take further action, which I would prefer to avoid.”

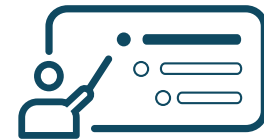


Verbal judo teaches officers to deflect hostile comments and redirect the conversation in a more constructive direction.

14. Brian Scott, “Verbal Judo: Talk Your Way Through Confrontations,” *Police Magazine*, July 31, 2000. <https://www.policemag.com/patrol/article/15350001/verbal-judo-talk-your-way-through-confrontations>.

Crisis Intervention Teams

Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs) were first developed in Memphis in 1988, as specialized units bringing together both the criminal justice and mental health first responders to better handle situations involving individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.¹⁵ CITs bring together police and mental health professionals to divert emotionally disturbed persons away from the criminal justice system toward mental health treatment. Recently, some police departments, like the one in Camden County, New Jersey, have begun CIT-style training for all officers. Back in 2015, as drugs and illegal weapons were flooding the streets, violent confrontations between the Camden County police officers and unarmed residents spiked, straining community relations.¹⁶ In response to these deteriorating conditions, Camden County police collaborated with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to develop new policies and practices to make the streets safer and rebuild community trust. The result was a new system called “Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics” (ICAT).



CITs bring together police and mental health professionals to divert emotionally disturbed persons away from the criminal justice system toward mental health treatment.

Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT)

ICAT theory rejects the traditional police tactic of meeting force with ever-increasing levels of force. Instead, ICAT encourages officers to move cautiously upon arrival, keep their distance, and communicate with dispatchers to obtain as much information about the subject, rather than immediately taking charge of a scene.¹⁷ Instead of a high-stress confrontation or a prompt arrest, the goal is to start off with a friendly conversation to calm the subject, while maintaining a safe distance and waiting for backup. The training also includes strategies for avoiding a “suicide by cop” scenario and what to do in situations where other officers may be using force inappropriately.



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ICAT attempts to take the combined skills of a crisis intervention team, package it together, and provide that training to an officer. The results have been promising, with reported decreases in use-of-force incidents and improved community relations.¹⁸ A recent evaluation of ICAT found the training led to 28 percent fewer use-of-force incidents by officers, 26 percent fewer injuries to citizens, and 36 percent fewer injuries to officers.¹⁹ In mid-2020, the NYPD announced mandatory crisis intervention training for all patrol officers based on ICAT. In 2021, New Jersey made the training mandatory for all law enforcement agencies statewide. In total, 700 police departments across the country have received some or all the ICAT training, including all 70,000 officers in New York

15. Michael S. Rogers et al., “Effectiveness of Police Crisis Intervention Training Programs,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 47:4 (September 2019), pp. 414-421. <https://jaapl.org/content/jaapl/47/4/414.full.pdf>.

16. Phaedra Trethan, “Forum preps police to defuse tense encounters,” *Courier-Post*, July 13, 2017. <https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/2017/07/13/police-train-de-escalation-techniques-camden/471951001>.

17. “ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics: A Training Guide for Defusing Critical Incidents,” Police Executive Research Forum, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.policeforum.org/icat-training-guide>.

18. Robin S. Engel et al., “Examining the Impact of *Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics* (ICAT) De-escalation Training for the Louisville Metro Police Department: Initial Findings,” University of Cincinnati Center for Police Research and Policy, Oct. 30, 2020. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/LMPD_ICAT%20Evaluation%20Initial%20Findings%20Report_FINAL%2009212020.pdf.

19. Ibid.

and New Jersey.²⁰ Something like ICAT could be applied nationwide, providing all officers with the same high-quality de-escalation training. This would not only make everyone safer, but it also has the potential to repair public trust in law enforcement by demonstrating a commitment to non-violent conflict resolution.

Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)

Based on the original Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model, CRIT prioritizes officer safety, public safety, and diverting individuals from the criminal justice system when appropriate.²¹ Sponsored and hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in partnership with organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Policing Institute, this 40-hour online training program prepares law enforcement officers to respond to people suffering from mental health conditions and substance use disorders. Additionally, it prioritizes the need to recognize and better assist people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), which is an area that has often been overlooked in other de-escalation programs.²² The most commonly reported disability reported among both state and federal prisoners is a cognitive disability, and individuals with IDD face the highest rates of violent victimization.²³

CRIT includes training content on public perceptions and attitudes toward disabilities, behavioral characteristics that help identify IDD, laws and policies specific to disability rights, and scenario-based activities to foster the specific skills needed to respond effectively in a given situation. CRIT was piloted in four police departments in 2022, including Shreveport, Louisiana; Corvallis, Oregon; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Rapid City, South Dakota. From 2021 through 2023, CRIT had 26 law enforcement and 10 corrections agency grantees.²⁴

Current Research and the Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act (LEDTA)

Recent studies have provided fresh evidence for the efficacy of de-escalation training. One randomized control trial in a medium-sized police department in the southwestern United States found that although officers spent significantly more time on scene after de-escalation training, they were 58 percent less likely to injure community members and there was no increased risk of officer injury.²⁵ Trained officers used a less patronizing tone, were more likely to build rapport,



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20. Tom Jackman, "Amid Rising Police Violence, New York City Police to Train Entire Force in de-Escalation," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/06/23/new-york-police-deescalate/>.

21. Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)," Department of Justice, Dec. 27, 2022. <https://bja.ojp.gov/events/crisis-response-and-intervention-training-crit>.

22. Ibid.

23. Laura M. Maruschak et al., "Disabilities Reported by Prisoners: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016," Department of Justice, March 2021. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/disabilities-reported-prisoners-survey-prison-inmates-2016>; Erika Harrell, "Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009–2019 – Statistical Tables," Department of Justice, November 2021. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/crime-against-persons-disabilities-2009-2019-statistical-tables>.

24. "BJA's Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT) Curriculum: Free Training Resources for Law Enforcement," International Association of Chiefs of Police, Nov. 2, 2023. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/CRIT/11.2.23%20BJA's%20CRIT%20Curriculum%20Webinar-508.pdf>.

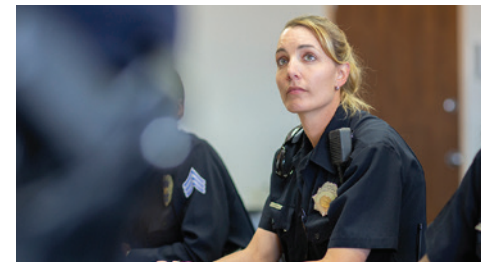
25. Michael D. White et al., "Can police de-escalation training reduce use of force and citizen injury without compromising officer safety?," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (Aug. 11, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-023-09584-8>.

and were less likely to use imposing body language.²⁶ Lastly, when engaging with trained officers, citizens were more satisfied with their treatment and with the ultimate resolution.²⁷

Although minimal research has been conducted, available findings show that officers who had more time to develop a plan before citizen contact were more likely to use de-escalation and that de-escalation attempts were less likely to be successful during specific encounters, such as with a citizen who did not comply with a lawful order or made anti-police statements; a domestic violence call for service; and when the interaction was officer-initiated.²⁸

De-escalation training has received support from politicians, academics, experts, and the public in response to the national crisis in police-citizen interactions, but evidence-based findings are limited to a few studies.²⁹ The lack of universal training coupled with the lack of evaluation contributes to an inability for law enforcement to determine what type of de-escalation strategy fits their agency and community needs.³⁰

With this in mind, LEDTA includes measures to fill the research gap in de-escalation tactics. It requires “pre-training and post-training tests to assess relevant knowledge and skills covered in the training curricula” as well as “follow-up evaluative assessments to determine the degree to which, in their jobs, participants in the training apply the knowledge and skills gained in the training.”³¹ The hope is that attaching evaluation requirements to federal de-escalation funds will provide the next generation of evidence for researchers and policymakers. Additionally, the new law includes “reporting requirements on interactions in which de-escalation tactics and other techniques in curricula developed or identified ... are used by each law enforcement agency that receives funding under this section,” as well as determinations about whether “the objectives of the training have been met” and whether “the training reduced or eliminated the risk of serious physical injury to officers, subjects, and third parties,” among other measures.³² Further, LEDTA includes a National Institute of Justice study and a Government Accountability Office study to evaluate the curriculum, the certification process, and other factors in order to make changes to the program as it moves forward. All these measures are geared towards ensuring that the program is successful in accomplishing its goals and that communities and law enforcement agencies reap the benefits where they are most needed.



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26. Michael D. White et al., “Beyond force and injuries: Examining alternative (and important) outcomes for police De-escalation training,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 89 (November-December 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2023.102129>.

27. Ibid.

28. Daniel Pontzer, “Recommendations for Examining Police Deescalation and use of Force Training, Policies, and Outcomes,” *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 36:2 (April 2021), pp. 314-332. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-021-09442-1>.

29. Robin S. Engel et al., “Does de-escalation training work?,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 19:3 (August 2020), pp. 721-759. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12467>.

30. Lisa Deveau, “Police De-Escalation Training & Education: Nationally, Provincially, and Municipally,” *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being* 6:1 (March 2021), pp. 2-5. <https://doi.org/10.35502/jcswb.183>.

31. “Community Policing Development: Implementation of De-escalation Training Act Program,” COPS Office, last accessed May 29, 2024. https://cops.usdoj.gov/de-escalation_training_act.

32. S. 4003 - 117th Congress, “Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022,” April 5, 2022. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4003>.

De-escalation Training in Hotspot Midwestern States

Recent national protests decrying the excessive use of force by police have been concentrated in certain areas of the country. To understand the impact of de-escalation training and the funding processes in these areas, we chose to examine training policies and practices in states that garnered media attention concerning use-of-force issues. Of particular interest were any legislative or regulatory changes that mandated or otherwise implemented de-escalation training since the protests of 2020. We selected Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin in response to highly publicized incidents of police use-of-force issues in Gary, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Kenosha in 2020.³³

Indiana

In 2023, Indiana lawmakers established a uniform, state-wide deadly force policy and training program.³⁴ The legislation requires de-escalation training to be included in pre-basic training, in-service training, and the executive training program, which criminologists say make police encounters with the public safer for all involved.³⁵ In 2018, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department provided recruits 232 hours of ICAT de-escalation training, an amount considered to be the most extensive in the country.³⁶ States vary widely in the number of hours and training models used, exemplified by the comparatively paltry five hours of de-escalation training required by the Philadelphia police department.

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) provides funding to agencies from their Law Enforcement Training Grant Program, and they monitor grant spending and research outcomes. The ICJI and the Justice Reinvestment Advisory Council annually evaluate the impact of criminal code reform on the state's criminal justice system. In addition to expanding de-escalation training, Indiana is also piloting mobile crisis response teams. In 2022, four organizations serving 18 counties were selected to provide mobile-crisis services in collaboration with the police.³⁷ The purpose of the project is to better respond to calls for service for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders and divert them from jails and hospitals to community resources when appropriate.



Indiana legislation requires de-escalation training to be included in pre-basic training, in-service training, and the executive training program, which criminologists say make police encounters with the public safer for all involved.

33. "The Black Lives Matter protests that swept America and beyond after the murder of George Floyd," *Reuters*, May 24, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/pictures/black-lives-matter-protests-that-swept-america-beyond-after-murder-george-floyd-2024-05-24>.

34. "Mandatory Training for Law Enforcement Officers," I.N. Law Enforcement Code, §§ 5-2-1-9, (2023 Indiana Code). <https://codes.findlaw.com/in/title-5-state-and-local-administration/in-code-sect-5-2-1-9>.

35. Mikey Galo and Reagan Creamer, "De-escalation training, 'culture change' may lead to less deadly encounters," *News 21*, Oct. 11, 2022. <https://inpursuit.news21.com/stories/police-de-escalation-training-downsizes-use-of-force>.

36. *Ibid.*

37. "Annual Evaluation: Indiana Criminal Code Reform," Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, December 2023. <https://www.in.gov/cji/grant-opportunities/files/1006-Report-2023.pdf>.

Illinois

Legislation mandating de-escalation training in Illinois went into effect July 1, 2022.³⁸ Every three years, officers are required to complete 30 hours of instruction covering implicit bias, high-risk traffic stops, officer safety, searches, and, “at least six hours of training on use-of-force techniques, including the use of de-escalation techniques to prevent or reduce the need for force whenever safe and feasible.”³⁹ The Police Training Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign partners with police departments and other institutions to host, facilitate, and research police education and training programs, including the 2021 implementation of scenario-based, simulated de-escalation training. CIT training is funded by federal and state grants, and the Illinois Law Enforcement and Training Standards Board sets the training standards and posts grant opportunities on its website.⁴⁰

Illinois has also advanced their de-escalation efforts by creating mobile crisis response teams. In 2020, the Mobile Crisis Response Unit (MCRU) was created in the Village of Orland Park, partnering a public safety official and mental health crisis worker who were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.⁴¹ In a two-month period, there were 61 calls for service, with the MCRU being on scene for approximately half. Fifty-six percent of the calls were resolved at the scene, with only 3 percent resulting in arrest. The success of the program led to its expansion into five other jurisdictions. A 2022 study of emergency calls in Chicago found that approximately 70 percent of the more than 1 million calls to the emergency system did not require a police enforcement response.⁴²

Michigan

Legislation was introduced in Michigan in 2020 and in 2021 to require at least 12 hours of training in subjects related to de-escalation techniques, crisis response techniques, and behavioral health, but the bill did not make it out of committee.⁴³ Public Act 1 was passed in 2023 and provided a one-time \$20 million grant to increase and implement police training.⁴⁴ The state’s use-of-force policy directs officers to “de-escalate the amount of force used proportionally to a resisting subject’s de-escalation of his/her resistance” and indicates that de-escalation training is woven into recruit school training.⁴⁵ Officers can volunteer to complete a 40-hour training to become crisis



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Michigan's use-of-force policy directs officers to “de-escalate the amount of force used proportionally to a resisting subject’s de-escalation of his/her resistance” and indicates that de-escalation training is woven into recruit school training.

38. “Illinois Compiled Statutes - 50 ILCS 705/10.6,” Illinois General Assembly, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=005007050K10.6>.

39. “Board Approved Guidelines,” Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, Jan. 1, 2022. <https://www.ptb.illinois.gov/media/1296/iletsb-in-service-mandated-training-guidelines-jan-2022.pdf>.

40. “Agency Information,” The Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.ptb.illinois.gov/about/agency-information>.

41. “How to Successfully Implement a Mobile Crisis Team,” The Council of State Governments Justice Center, April 2021. https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Field-Notes_Mobile-Crisis-Team_508FINAL34.pdf.

42. “Alternatives to Policing: How U.S. Cities Are Advancing Community Safety by Taking a Multidisciplinary Approach,” Reimagine Richmond, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.reimagerichmond.org/en/alternatives-to-policing-report>.

43. Summary of Introduced Bill, “Law Enforcement Officer Training,” SB 482, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee, 2021 Reg. Sess. (M.I. 2021). <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2021-2022/billanalysis/Senate/htm/2021-SFA-0482-G.htm#:~:text=%2D%2D%20Require%2C%20subject%20to%20appropriation,1%2C%202024%3B%20and%20annually%20thereafter>.

44. Priya Vijayakumar, “Michigan mandates more training for in-service police officers,” Michigan Public NPR, Feb. 7, 2023. <https://www.michiganpublic.org/public-safety/2023-02-07/michigan-mandates-more-training-for-in-service-police-officers>.

45. “Use of Force Policy,” Michigan State Police, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.michigan.gov/msp/public-information/transparency/accordion/policies/use-of-force>.

intervention certified.⁴⁶ In a state-wide survey of emergency dispatchers, only 14 percent sent CIT trained officers to crisis calls, and some did not know about their local CIT program until well after it was implemented.⁴⁷ Based on these findings, collaborative training is needed to more effectively deploy the officers that are CIT trained.

Minnesota

CIT training is required by Minnesota law.⁴⁸ Since 2018, every chief law enforcement officer has been required to provide in-service training in crisis response, conflict management, and cultural diversity. Officers are required to complete at least six hours of crisis intervention and mental illness crisis training that includes de-escalation techniques. The Minnesota Board of Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) established a system for promoting continued education and offers a one-credit course in de-escalation that can be completed online or in person.⁴⁹ Minnesota has had CITs since 2009, with a presence in 12 of 87 counties.⁵⁰ Referencing a 2017 police shooting of an 18-year-old male diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, in which the four responding officers had not received any de-escalation training, the director of the East Metro Mental Health Alliance “traces the rising number of incidents between police and people with mental health problems to a lack of resources and training,” among other things.⁵¹

Following the murder of George Floyd, the Minneapolis Police Department began implementing their own reforms in July 2020.⁵² This included comprehensive use-of-force and de-escalation training and clarification of what the department considers to be use of force. The department’s policy was amended to require “officers to use de-escalation techniques and other alternatives to higher levels of force consistent with their training whenever feasible and appropriate before resorting to force and to reduce the need for force.”⁵³ Additional police department reforms are required under a 2023 lawsuit settlement between the city and the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.⁵⁴



Since 2018, every chief law enforcement officer has been required to provide in-service training in crisis response, conflict management, and cultural diversity. Officers are required to complete at least six hours of crisis intervention and mental illness crisis training that includes de-escalation techniques.

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46. Erin Bowling, “Michigan police officers train for mental health crisis response, de-escalation,” WILX 10, March 10, 2023. <https://www.wilx.com/2023/03/10/michigan-police-officers-train-mental-health-crisis-response-de-escalation>.
47. “Michigan statewide emergency dispatch survey,” Wayne State University School of Social Work, December 2021. <https://behaviorhealthjustice.wayne.edu/crisis-response/dispatch-survey-dec21>.
48. “Training in Crisis Response, Conflict Management, and Cultural Diversity,” M.N. Criminal Procedure, §§ 626.8469 (Minnesota Statutes 2023). <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/626.8469>.
49. “Continuing Education Offerings,” Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://mn.gov/post/applicants/courses.jsp?id=1189-587331>.
50. “Our Model,” Minnesota Crisis Intervention Team, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://mncit.org/about-us/our-model>.
51. Manda Lillie, “As mental health calls rise, MN police training takes on vital role,” MPR News, Nov. 3, 2017. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/11/03/minnesota-cops-training-deescalate-crises-mentally-ill>.
52. “Police reforms since June 2020,” Minneapolis City of Lakes, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/mayor/issues-and-priorities/public-safety/police-reforms-since-june-2020/#:~:text=Prohibition%20on%20the%20application%20for,jurisdictions%20for%20no%2Dknock%20warrants>.
53. “An After-Action Review of City Agencies’ Responses to Activities Directly Following George Floyd’s Death on May 25, 2020,” City of Minneapolis, March 7, 2022. <https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/RCAV2/26623/2020-Civil-Unrest-After-Action-Review-Report.pdf>.
54. “State of Minnesota by Rebecca Lucero vs. City of Minneapolis - Settlement Agreement and Order,” March 31, 2023. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23873582-settlement-agreement-mdhr-mpls?responsive=1&title=1>.

Ohio

Legislation addressing police de-escalation training was introduced in Ohio in 2021, but the bill did not advance.⁵⁵ On May 14, 2024, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission unanimously approved the continued professional training recommendations of the state attorney general's office, which also offers funding for continuing education and professional training.⁵⁶ The state now requires a minimum of two hours of crisis mitigation de-escalation training. This follows an earlier report outlining the deficiencies in the existing training curriculum that no longer meets the needs of an evolving society and the expectations of police.⁵⁷ Some of the reforms and recommendations in Ohio were prompted by the 2014 Consent Decree and U.S. Department of Justice findings that the Cleveland Police Department engaged in a pattern of excessive force.⁵⁸ Other reforms have followed use-of-force incidents in other jurisdictions across the state, including the shooting of a man experiencing a mental health crisis by a Columbus police officer in 2023.⁵⁹



Ohio now requires a minimum of two hours of crisis mitigation de-escalation training.

Wisconsin

Police de-escalation training is not required by law in Wisconsin; however, the state's department of justice updated their use-of-force policy and procedure manual and training curriculum in 2021 to explicitly include de-escalation training and tactics. Wisconsin law does include a duty to intervene and report instances of perceived inappropriate or excessive use of force by a fellow agent or officer.⁶⁰ Officers are required to complete a minimum of four hours of scenario-based de-escalation training each year.⁶¹ The Madison Wisconsin Police Department offers a three-day instructor training on Law Enforcement Active De-escalation Strategies (L.E.A.D.S.).⁶² L.E.A.D.S. was developed in 2007 and has been taught across the country.⁶³ Funding to support de-escalation training is available through the state department of administration's Law Enforcement Agency Grant.⁶⁴ The Madison Police Department also received federal funding in 2021 when they were awarded \$126,420 for continued de-escalation training by the U.S. Department of Justice's COPS Office.⁶⁵



Wisconsin law includes a duty to intervene and report instances of perceived inappropriate or excessive use of force by a fellow agent or officer.

55. H.B.134 - "Bill Analysis" - 134th General Assembly, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, Feb. 18, 2021. <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=16083&format=pdf>.

56. "OPOTC Unanimously Approves Task Force's Recommended Changes for Law Enforcement Training," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, May 14, 2024. <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/May-2024/OPOTC-Unanimously-Approves-Task-Force%E2%80%99s-Recommendations>.

57. "The Future of Police Training in Ohio: A Blue Ribbon Task Force Report," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, Feb. 21, 2024. <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/The-Future-of-Police-Training-in-Ohio>.

58. "The Consent Decree," Cleveland Community Police Commission, May 26, 2015. <https://clecpc.org/resources/consent-decree>.

59. George Shillcock, "Ohio police who use deadly force are not being identified. Why the lack of transparency?," *WOSU Public Media*, Oct. 30, 2023. <https://www.wosu.org/politics-government/2023-10-30/ohio-police-who-use-deadly-force-are-not-being-identified-why-the-lack-of-transparency>.

60. "Wisconsin State Legislature: 175.46(1)(g) - Mutual aid agreements," last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/175/46/1/g>.

61. "Standard Operating Procedure: 082 - Training and Career Development," Milwaukee Police Department, April 10, 2024. <https://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/mpdAuthors/SOP/082-TRAININGANDCAREERDEVELOPMENT.pdf>.

62. Kevin Dillon, "WI - L.E.A.D.S. Law Enforcement Active De-escalation Strategies - 3 day Instructor Training," POLICECOMBAT.COM, March 29, 2023. <https://www.policecombat.com/wi-l-e-a-d-s-law-enforcement-active-de-escalation-strategies-3-day-instructor-training>.

63. "Active De-escalation Strategies Certification," DLG Learning Center, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://dlglearningcenter.com/leads-law-enforcement-active-de-escalation-strategies-certification>.

64. "Law Enforcement Agency Grant," Wisconsin.Gov, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/LocalGovtsGrants/LEAGrant.aspx>.

65. Logan Rude and Tahleel Mohieldin, "MPD receives two federal grants for violence prevention, de-escalation training," *Fox 47*, Oct. 20, 2021. <https://fox47.com/news/local/mpd-receives-2-federal-grants-for-violence-prevention-de-escalation-training>.

Federal Funding for De-escalation Training

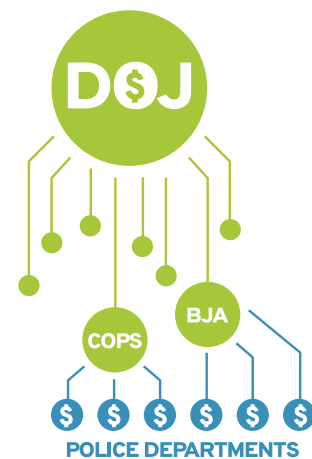
Although most funding for law enforcement comes from state and local governments, federal funding still plays a key role in shaping policies likely to be adopted by local agencies.⁶⁶ Overall, the share of state and local revenue that comes from the federal government nationwide has been steadily rising as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1960, representing a larger portion of state and local spending that is directly tied to federal appropriations.⁶⁷ Federal grants now make up about 17 percent of total state and local governmental revenues.⁶⁸

Funding Sources for State and Local Law Enforcement

Federal grants to law enforcement most frequently come through the Department of Justice, which has a plethora of offices through which grants are administered. These offices include the COPS Office, the Office of Justice Programs—which houses the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)—and the Office on Violence Against Women. Of these, the COPS Office and BJA are the most common federal granting entities for police departments.⁶⁹ Some of these grants are more specific than others, but two primary streams already support de-escalation training for law enforcement.

The first of these is the Community Policing Development (CPD): De-Escalation Training program administered by the COPS Office.⁷⁰ The second is the well-known Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program administered by BJA.⁷¹ Both of these relatively large programs support agency de-escalation training, but the former is solely dedicated to de-escalation training, and the latter is broader, with de-escalation training being one of many allowable uses of funds. Another key difference is that law enforcement agencies apply for and are awarded COPS Office grants directly.⁷² Byrne-JAG grants, on the other hand, are awarded to state or local governments (e.g., state, town, city, county, etc.) to use for supporting law enforcement.⁷³

Other temporary sources of federal funding have been used to support de-escalation training including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds, opioid settlement funds, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, many



66. “Criminal Justice Expenditures: Police, Corrections, and Courts,” Urban Institute, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/criminal-justice-police-corrections-courts-expenditures>.

67. Ryan Nunn et al., “Nine facts about state and local policy,” The Brookings Institute, Jan. 31, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/nine-facts-about-state-and-local-policy>.

68. “How Much Funding Do State and Local Governments Receive from the Federal Government?,” Peter G. Peterson Foundation, April 11, 2024. <https://www.pgpf.org/blog/2024/04/how-much-funding-do-state-and-local-governments-receive-from-the-federal-government>.

69. “Police Department Budgeting: A Guide for Law Enforcement Chief Executives,” Police Executive Research Forum, November 2002. https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Budgeting/police%20department%20budgeting%20-%20a%20guide%20for%20law%20enforcement%20chief%20executives%202002.pdf.

70. “Community Policing Development: De-escalation Training Solicitations,” COPS Office, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/de-escalation>.

71. “Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, Overview,” Bureau of Justice Assistance, Feb. 20, 2024. <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/jag/overview>.

72. “New Funding Opportunities Open Now!,” *Community Policing Dispatch*, April 2023. https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/04-2023/new_funding_opportunities.html.

73. Bureau of Justice Assistance, “Bureau of Justice Assistance Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Frequently Asked Question (FAQs),” U.S. Department of Justice, June 2023. <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/jag-faqs.pdf>.

of which have already run out or will expire in 2025.⁷⁴ Reforms supported by these sources include de-escalation training, police-led deflection models, and drug treatment, among other system changes.⁷⁵ Agencies that benefited from these funding streams should document the successes they saw from programming supported by temporary funding to prepare for more sustained resourcing for these purposes through LEDTA.

Importantly for agencies, federal resourcing can help make de-escalation programming a permanent fixture in their own budgets going forward. Even temporary federal resources can provide the support needed to begin a program that may be difficult to fund with state and local budgets before having evidence of success in a given community. Launching effective programs with external support allows local agencies to establish the credibility needed to initiate longstanding programs in their departments, which will be essential to successful programming.

Resourcing Access

Currently, law enforcement can access federal funding through a number of different streams. With regards to LEDTA, the implementation, which is already underway, is a multi-step process, and resources are not yet available for law enforcement to access.⁷⁶ The legislation lays out a process for the appropriation of \$34 million to the Department of Justice to fully develop a de-escalation curriculum and recommendations, and, following that, the appropriation of \$90 million for the Department of Justice to implement such trainings. Therefore, resources available to law enforcement under this law will include both a recommended curriculum as well as trainings that meet these yet to be established standards.⁷⁷

The curriculum development portion of the law is overseen by COPS, and the resulting funding stream will be administered through BJA's Byrne-JAG grants to states. The law requires DOJ to both develop and identify effective existing de-escalation training and to establish processes to certify such training programs, prior to resources being made available to law enforcement for these purposes.⁷⁸ Therefore, funding cannot be accessed by agencies until the foundational steps are completed in coming years.

The intention of this joint implementation effort by COPS and BJA is to reduce as many barriers as possible for agencies in need of de-escalation training



Law enforcement can access federal funding through a number of different streams.

74. H.R.748 - 116th Congress, "CARES Act," Jan. 24, 2019. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748>; "Strategies for Effectively Allocating Opioid Settlement Funds," RAND, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.rand.org/health-care/centers/optic/tools/fund-allocation.html>; H.R.1319 - 117th Congress, "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021," Feb. 24, 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text>.

75. Chris Bolt, "More ARPA Funds Approved for Rent, Gunshot Monitors, Police De-escalation Training," WAER 88.3, Sept. 27, 2021. <https://www.waer.org/news/2021-09-27/more-arpa-funds-approved-for-rent-gunshot-monitors-police-de-escalation-training>; Yucel Ors et al., "ARPA 3-Year Anniversary: Public Safety and Justice," National League of Cities, March 7, 2024. <https://www.nlc.org/article/2024/03/07/arpa-3-year-anniversary-public-safety-and-justice>; "Dose of Reality: Opioid Settlement Funds," Wisconsin Department of Health Services, May 8, 2024. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/settlement-funds.htm>; Akua Amaning, "ARPA Funds Continue To Support Community Safety Efforts Through Community Responder Programs," Center for American Progress, Oct. 12, 2022. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/arpa-funds-continue-to-support-community-safety-efforts-through-community-responder-programs>.

76. Sarah Anderson and Jillian Snider, "R Sheet On The Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act of 2022: Purpose, Implementation, and Next Steps," R Street Institute, April 18, 2024. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/r-sheet-on-the-law-enforcement-de-escalation-training-act-of-2022-purpose-implementation-and-next-steps>.

77. "Cornyn, Whitehouse Introduce Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Bill," John Cornyn United States Senator for Texas News, April 5, 2023. <https://www.cornyn.senate.gov/news/cornyn-whitehouse-introduce-law-enforcement-de-escalation-training-bill>.

78. Ibid.

resources and practices and put agencies of all sizes on equal footing to take full advantage of any resources available that they deem necessary for their officers and constituencies. Although the grant funds will be run through Byrne-JAG, technical assistance from COPS will still be available to agencies to help them take full advantage of the resources established under LEDTA.⁷⁹

Regardless of whether agencies are in states that have implemented their own requirements for de-escalation training, law enforcement can stand to benefit from effective programs that improve relationships between departments and the communities that they serve. Resources are available to achieve these ends, and it is critical that agencies are informed of their availability.

Conclusion

De-escalation training offers great promise to both law enforcement agencies and communities. There are already a number of available sources for federal funding, both for agencies in states that mandate de-escalation training and for those that do not. The strategic new program set up by LEDTA will set new national standards for agencies that wish to participate and provide new opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of various forms of de-escalation. In developing a new de-escalation curriculum, the Department of Justice should recognize that diverse communities have diverse needs. The final curriculum should leave enough flexibility so that programs can be tailored to each community. Further, to ensure that the program has maximum impact, outreach to law enforcement will be critical to make leaders aware of new resources, assist them in accessing them, and help them implement de-escalation training. Law enforcement perspectives will also be needed to develop and evaluate the curriculum and gain buy-in for de-escalation efforts. We are at the beginning of a national experiment in de-escalation. Taken together, these new programs and funding sources are a rare opportunity for law enforcement agencies to collectively improve, make communities and officers safer, and set a new standard for smart, cost-effective community policing nationwide.



Regardless of whether agencies are in states that have implemented their own requirements for de-escalation training, law enforcement can stand to benefit from effective programming that improves relationships between departments and the communities that they serve.

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79. "Police Grants," *Police1*, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.police1.com/police-grants>; "Grant Funding for Police Departments," *PoliceGrantsHelp*, last accessed May 29, 2024. <https://www.policegrantshelp.com>.