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|  <p style="text-align: center;">Massachusetts<br/>Department of Correction<br/><b>STANDARD<br/>OPERATING<br/>PROCEDURE</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Effective Date<br><br>10/28/2025                                               | Responsible Division<br><br>Deputy Commissioner,<br>Prison Division                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Annual Review Date<br><br>10/28/2025                                           |                                                                                          |
| Policy Name<br><br><b>STANDARD OPERATING<br/>PROCEDURE TO<br/>103 CMR 505, USE OF FORCE<br/><br/>DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | M.G.L. Reference:                                                              |                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | DOC Policy Reference:<br>103 CMR 505                                           |                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | ACA/PREA Standards:<br>5-ACI-1D-19; 1CTA-3A-18; 1 CTA-3A-20                    |                                                                                          |
| Attachments<br>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Library<br>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Applicability: Staff                                                                     |
| Public Access<br>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                | Location:<br>Department Central Policy File<br>Superintendent/Division Head Policy Files |
| <p><b>PURPOSE:</b><br/>This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes internal guidelines consistent with 103 CMR 505, <i>Use of Force</i>, for de-escalation techniques in connection with uses of reasonable force by Department staff members.</p> <p><b>RESPONSIBLE STAFF FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF POLICY:</b><br/>Deputy Commissioner, Prison Division<br/>Assistant Deputy Commissioners, Northern and Southern Sectors<br/>Director, Operational Services Division<br/>Superintendents</p> <p><b>CANCELLATION:</b><br/>103 CMR 505 cancels all previous Department policy statements, bulletins, directives, orders, notices, rules, or regulations regarding Internal Regulations/Policies which are inconsistent with this document.</p> <p><b>SEVERABILITY CLAUSE:</b><br/>If any part of 103 CMR 505 is, for any reason, held to be in excess of the authority of the Commissioner, such decision shall not affect any other part of this policy.</p> |                                                                                |                                                                                          |

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## **I. PHILOSOPHY**

It is the Department's philosophy and practice to train staff to attempt to de-escalate any situation involving conflict where the need for use of force may arise. Staff shall attempt to employ de-escalation techniques prior to any use of force. Staff shall only use the amount of reasonable and proportionate force, given the totality of the circumstances, necessary to gain control of an inmate; protect and ensure the safety of all incarcerated inmates, staff, and others; prevent significant property damage; and ensure institution safety, security, and good order. Force shall never be used as a form of punishment. Staff shall be trained in methods of de-escalation and instructed that force may only be used as a last resort. By using de-escalation techniques, the Department recognizes that safer alternatives to force may be available, which in turn may prevent injuries to staff and inmates.

## **II. STEPS/GUIDELINES**

Verbal direction and interaction is the most effective and widely used tool a staff member has to accomplish the job. Success in gaining compliance, or conversely, the escalation of a situation into a use of physical force, may often be attributed to the staff member's use or non-use of verbal skills.

### **A. Principles of verbal tactics:**

1. Acknowledge feelings but deal with observable behavior.
2. Focus on restoring cognitive thinking and the ability to make rational decisions, instead of being controlled by emotion.
3. Maintain control of yourself and the situation.
4. Know what you are trying to accomplish and how to do it.
5. Assess the situation and determine where the inmate falls in the behavior sequence of Baseline, Upset, Angry, or Out of Control.

### **B. BASELINE behavior is an inmate's day-to-day behavior that they display. Also known as the "status quo," this behavior is different from inmate to inmate. Responses to this behavior may include:**

1. Officer presence
2. Consistent with rounds
3. Granting/Denying requests
4. Referrals to proper areas
5. Ensuring inmate compliance with cell decorum, and other rules and regulations

### **C. If the inmate is UPSET, you may use the Tactical Questioning techniques:**

1. Isolate the inmate and tactfully address the inmate's specific behavior.
2. Let the inmate identify and interpret the problem.

3. Employ active listening and verbal mirroring.
  4. Ask the inmate what the inmate is doing about the issue.
  5. Have the inmate identify other resolution options.
  6. Establish accountability with the inmate by restating the option selected by the inmate.
- D. If the inmate is **ANGRY**, employ **Powerful Directives**. Elements of a **Powerful Directive** are:
1. Keep it clear and simple. Use the rule of five (5) simple words, e.g., *“Step out of the dayroom.”*
  2. If there is no immediate compliance, give two options: one negative (results of non-compliance) and one positive (desired behavior), e.g., *“Return to your cell or return to your seat.”*
  3. Offer options **you** can enforce. If you do not have the authority to change an inmate’s housing status, **then it is not an option**. Calling someone who has that authority then becomes the option.
  4. Always state the desired option last as the last statement a person hears has more impact on their decision.
  5. Keep options reasonable and within policy.
  6. If the situation allows, give reasonable time and space for the inmate to make a choice.
  7. Structure your statements and actions so that it is the inmate against policy, not the inmate against you or another staff member.
- E. If the inmate is **OUT OF CONTROL**, the inmate may not respond to directives, and there is an increased risk of assault on staff members or other inmates. In this state, the cognitive chain is broken.
1. **OUT OF CONTROL** falls into two modes (**Predatory & Affective**):
    - a. **Predatory**: Behavior that is the result of a conscious choice to be non-compliant, resistive, or prone to assault. It is marked by a lack of emotion.
    - b. **Affective**: Behavior that is animated and emotional. It carries with it extreme anaerobic output. In looking at the anaerobic outline and understanding the process, the effectiveness of verbal communication is increased when the affective behavior is in the depletion or rest cycle.
  2. The basic responses to **OUT OF CONTROL** behavior (**Safety First**):
    - a. Give space. The inmate may attack without warning.
    - b. Display a lack of threat by:
      - Opening hands;

- Nodding head;
  - Breaking eye contact; and/or
  - Backing away at an angle
- c. Make notification. The inmate's adrenaline will likely make the inmate very difficult to restrain.
- d. Isolate and contain to eliminate access to weapons or allies.
- e. Follow up with appropriate reports and documentation for the situation.