

Columbia County Sheriff's Office

Subject: USE OF FORCE						Policy A22	
Effective: December 04, 2019			Standard Number(s): 20.1,20.5, 20.7, 21.2, 32.3 (Civil 19,34,40, 78,79,80,81,82,84,85)				
Rescinded:		Amended: 12/31/2020		Sheriff David P. Bartlett			
Reviewed:							

Purpose: To establish a policy whereby personnel of the CCSO have guidance and procedures in the use and reporting of the use and presentation of physical force.

I. Policy

- A. The federal and state standards by which the use of force is measured are both founded in the basic premise of objective reasonableness. The amount of force that is used by the officers shall be the amount of force that is objectively reasonable under the circumstances for the officer involved to effect an arrest, prevent an escape, or in defense of themselves or others. The standard of objective reasonableness, established by the United States Supreme Court in [Graham v. Connor](#), is used in this policy and intended to provide officers with guidelines for the use of force, including deadly physical force.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Objectively Reasonable-** An objective standard used to judge an officer's action. Under this standard, a particular application of force must be judged through the perspective of a reasonable officer facing the same set of circumstances, without the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, and be based on the totality of the facts that are known to that officer at the time that the force was used.
- B. **Deadly Physical Force-** Physical force which, under the circumstances in which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or other serious physical injury.
- C. **Physical Injury-** Impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.
- D. **Serious Physical Injury-** Physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health or protracted loss of impairment of the function of any bodily organ.

III. USE OF FORCE

- A. In general terms, force is authorized to be used when reasonably believed to be necessary to affect a lawful arrest or detention, prevent the escape of a person from custody, or in defense of one's self or another.
- B. Under the 4th Amendment, a police officer may use only such force as is "objectively reasonable" under the circumstances. The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene.

IV. DETERMINING THE OBJECTIVE REASONABLENESS OF FORCE

- A. When used, force should be only that which is objectively reasonable given the circumstances perceived by the officer at such time of the event.
- B. Factors that may be used in determining the reasonableness of force include, but not limited to:
 - 1. The severity of the crime of circumstance;
 - 2. The level and immediacy of threat or resistance posed by the suspect;
 - 3. The potential for injury to citizens, officers, and suspects;
 - 4. The risk or attempt of the suspect to escape;
 - 5. The knowledge, training, and experience of the officer;
 - 6. Officer/subject considerations such as age, size, relative strength, skill level, injury, or exhaustion, and the number of officers or subjects;
 - 7. Other environmental conditions or exigent circumstances.

V. DUTY TO INTERVENE

- A. Any member present and observing another member using force that he/she reasonably believes to be clearly beyond that which is justified under the circumstances shall intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force, if and when the member has a realistic opportunity to prevent harm.
- B. A member who observes another officer use force that exceeds the degree of force as described in subdivision A of this section, shall promptly report these observations to a Supervisor.

VI. USE OF PHYSICAL FORCE

- A. A police officer or a peace officer, in the course of effecting or attempting to effect an arrest, or of preventing or attempting to prevent the escape from custody, of a person whom he or she reasonably believes to have committed an offense, may use physical force when and to the extent he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to effect the arrest, or to prevent the escape from custody, or in self-defense or to defend a third person from what he or she reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of physical force.
- B. Deadly physical force may be used for such purposes as those stated in section [35.30 of the New York State Penal Law](#).
- C. Where feasible, some warning should be given prior to the use of physical force.

VII. PROHIBITED USES OF FORCE

- A. Force shall not be used by a member for the following reasons:
 - 1. To extract an item from the anus or vagina of a subject without a warrant, except where exigent circumstances are present;
 - 2. To coerce a confession from a subject in custody;
 - 3. To obtain blood, saliva, urine, or other bodily fluid or cell, from an individual for the purposes of scientific testing in lieu of a court order where required;
 - 4. Against persons who are handcuffed or restrained unless it is used to prevent injury, escape, or otherwise overcome active or passive resistance posed by the subject.
- B. No member of this agency will utilize a chokehold or similar restraint which applies pressure on the throat or neck of a person.
- C. Only issued or approved equipment will be carried on duty when applying physical force, except in emergency situations when a member must use any resources at his or her disposal.

VIII. REPORTING & REVIEWING THE USE OF FORCE

- A. Any member who has custody of a person must provide attention to the medical and mental health needs of a person in their custody and obtain assistance and treatment of such needs, which are reasonable and provided in good faith (pursuant to [New York State Civil Rights Law § 28](#)).
 - 1. This includes appropriate and timely medical attention being provided to a party injured as a result of a use of force incident.
 - 2. The immediate mental health needs of a person shall be based upon the reasonable cause to believe that a person, who appears to be mentally ill, is conducting themselves in a manner which is likely to result in serious harm to themselves or others (pursuant to [New York State Mental Hygiene Law § 9.41](#)).
 - 3. Members should document any requests for necessary medical or mental health treatment as well as efforts of police to arrange for such treatment.
 - 4. If a person refuses medical treatment, such refusal will be documented.
- B. Members involved in use of force incident as described below shall notify their supervisor as soon as practicable and shall complete a departmental [Use of Force/ Firearms Report](#).
 - 1. Use of force that results in a physical injury.
 - 2. Incidents that result in a complaint of pain from the suspect except complaints of minor discomfort from compliant handcuffing or from compliance techniques.
 - 3. Incidents where a conducted electrical weapon (CEW) was intentionally discharged or accidentally discharged after being displayed.
 - 4. Presents, uses or discharges a firearm at or in the direction of another person;
 - i. [New York State Executive Law §837-v](#) requires that any [discharge of a weapon](#), while either on duty or off duty, in the direction of a person be verbally reported to the involved officer's supervisor within six hours and a written report prepared within forty-eight hours of occurrence.

5. Uses a chokehold or similar restraint that applies pressure to the throat or windpipe of a person in a manner that may hinder breathing or reduce intake of air;
 6. Presents, uses or deploys a chemical agent, including, but not limited to, oleoresin capsicum, pepper spray or tear gas;
 7. Presents, uses or deploys an impact weapon, including, but not limited to, a baton or billy; or
 8. Presents, uses or deploys an electronic control weapon, including, but not limited to, an electronic stun gun, flash bang, or long range acoustic device.
 9. Engages in conduct which results in the death or serious bodily injury of another person. Serious bodily injury is defined as bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death, unconsciousness, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss of impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or mental faculty.
- C. Supervisors will ensure that members receive any necessary assistance, including medical treatment. They will also ensure that any injuries to members shall be properly documented and reported.
- D. In the event that a member is unable to complete reports due to injuries, the supervisor will prepare or cause to be prepared, and submit them.

IX. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING USE OF FORCE INCIDENTS

- A. The member's immediate supervisor will respond to the scene of the incident immediately after learning of the use of physical force. If the member's immediate supervisor is not available, the chain of command will be followed and the next highest ranking member in the chain of command will be dispatched to the scene. The first supervisor to the scene will ensure that a thorough investigation is conducted. Whenever possible, this investigation will be conducted at the scene.
- B. A supervisor that is made aware of a force incident shall ensure the completion of a [Use of Force/ Firearms Report](#) by all members engaging in reportable use of force and, to the extent practical, make a record of all officers present.
- C. Supervisors will determine if an investigator will respond to the scene of an incident involving the use of force. With assistance of the investigator a supervisor will determine what level of the investigator's services will be utilized; including but not limited to photos, measurements and diagrams.
- D. The Division Lieutenant will receive the supervisor's report and review the circumstances of the investigation. After reviewing the report, the Lieutenant will forward the report to the Division Captain, who will determine if further investigation is required. In the absence of a Lieutenant, the Division Captain will assume both functions.
- E. The Division Captain will determine by reviewing all reports if the use of force used meets the criteria set forth in [New York State Executive § 837-T](#), or New York State Commission of Correction minimum standards. If such criteria has been met the Division Captain will cause such report to be made to the Division as stated in [New York State Executive Law §837-T](#), or Commission of Correction minimum standards.