

Chapter 6: Serving Your Community

Building trust and effective communication with all members of your community





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Lesson 1: Introduction to Responding to Your Community

A community's relationship with law enforcement greatly affects how officers do their jobs. You can create opportunities for positive change by strengthening trust between you and the community you serve. Building trust begins with addressing residents' concerns and ensuring a safe community.

Good communication, critical thinking, and sound judgment are crucial for determining when to use force and when to try other methods to resolve conflict.

Responding to Vulnerable Adults

A **vulnerable adult** is a person 18 or older whose ability to perform activities of daily living or provide for their own care or protection is impaired due to mental, emotional, sensory, long-term physical or developmental disability, brain damage, or infirmities of aging.

Be sensitive and aware of people's differences and demonstrate respect for their limitations. Never dismiss or disregard a person because of their differences.





Techniques for Responding to Vulnerable Adults

Minimize Distractions

Disperse any crowds and reduce environmental stimuli

Respect Personal Space

Avoid physical contact unless necessary

Use Calming Body Language

Relax, breathe, and maintain appropriate posture

Allow Self-Stimulation

Permit coping behaviors if situation allows

Interacting With Your Community

Core Communication Techniques

- Maintain eye contact and speak directly
- Speak clearly in a respectful tone
- Use short, simple phrases
- Avoid slang expressions
- Model desired behavior
- Maintain calm and reassuring tone
- Use encouragement throughout



De-escalation Strategies



Practice Calming

Defuse intensity through courtesy, active listening, calm voice, and appropriate reactionary gap



Assess the Situation

Be aware of behaviors, statements, and possible role of substances



Consider Environment

Note environmental effects, circumstances, injuries, or signs of substance abuse



Lesson 2: Serving the Elderly

An **elderly person** (Chapter 825, F.S.) is a person 60 years or older suffering from infirmities of aging as manifested by advanced age, organic brain damage, or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction, to the extent that their ability to provide adequately for their own care or protection is impaired.

Common Characteristics of Elderly Persons



Physical Limitations

Limited mobility, vision, or hearing; lack of strength; bone deterioration



Memory Loss

May experience dementia or Alzheimer's disease affecting cognitive function



Living Situations

May live alone, with family, in nursing homes, or be homeless

Understanding Memory Loss

Dementia

An umbrella term for organic, progressive mental disorder characterized by loss of memory, impaired judgment and abstract thinking, and personality changes.

Alzheimer's Disease

A progressive brain disorder that gradually destroys memory and ability to learn, reason, make judgments, communicate, and carry out daily activities.





Interacting With Elderly Persons

Understand Their Perspective

Make sure you understand the problem from their viewpoint and explain how you can help

Direct Communication

Speak directly to them, establish eye contact, use conversational tone, speak loudly only if necessary

Include in Discussions

Include them in all discussions concerning their welfare; adjust communication based on limitations

Show Dignity and Respect

Always treat them with dignity, respect, and patience



Resources for the Elderly



Florida Elder Helpline

(800) 96-ELDER - Provides information to help older residents obtain local social services



211 Helpline

Available to all persons for crisis counseling, disaster assistance, housing, and food assistance



Department of Elder Affairs

Provides direct services through Division of Statewide Community-Based Services



Lesson 3: Serving Juveniles

Florida law defines a person younger than 18 years of age as a juvenile. While the age of legal maturity is 18, **the brain is not fully developed until age 25**. This is a possible explanation for risky behavior or lack of impulse control that juveniles and young adults may exhibit.

Factors Affecting Juvenile Decision-Making

Young people generally reflect values instilled by their families, schools, communities, and cultures. Ethnicity, socioeconomic status, expectations, and numerous other factors affect a juvenile's characteristics and behaviors.

Some children are exposed to domestic violence as victims or witnesses. These children are susceptible to PTSD and may demonstrate behavior problems in adolescence, such as juvenile delinquency and alcohol or substance abuse.





Characteristics of Juvenile Offenders

Boundary Testing

May push boundaries of rules at home and in public, showing high degree of irresponsibility

Authority Issues

May lack respect for authority and display unpredictable behavioral patterns

Violent Behaviors

May engage in fighting, bullying, using weapons, and gang-related violence

Early Onset Risk

Juveniles who start offending before age 13 are more likely to become serious and violent offenders



Interacting With Juveniles

Officers can serve as role models and help steer potential juvenile offenders toward becoming law-abiding citizens. A high degree of self-control, patience, flexibility, and understanding is required to work effectively with juveniles.

Build positive relationships by providing information and support through empathy, comfort, and physical assistance. Look for ways to provide guidance to juveniles and their families to increase community support.





Actions When Dealing With Juvenile Offenders



Important: A juvenile younger than 7 years may not be arrested or charged unless the violation is a forcible felony or third-degree felony of burglary or trespassing with burglary tools.



Responding to Runaway Children

Children who run away are at considerable risk of falling prey to horrible crimes. **Always presume that the runaway child is in danger.**

You have no arrest authority for a runaway or school absentee. However, if you believe a child is a runaway, take the child into protective custody and contact the parent or legal guardian. If unavailable, contact the Department of Children and Families.

Note: Protective custody is not a criminal arrest.



Lesson 4: Serving Veterans

Veterans transitioning from active duty to civilian life possess unique experiences from military culture and combat. Cultivating knowledge of military principles will prepare you to make a connection with veterans in your community.

Identifying Veterans



Tattoos

Military subject matter or
branch logos



Identification

Military ID or "Veteran" on
Florida license



Vehicle Markers

License plates and bumper
stickers with military
subject matter



Physical Indicators

Command presence,
military haircut, blended
clothing

Physical and Psychological Stressors

Musculoskeletal Injuries

Physical injuries from service that may limit mobility or cause chronic pain

Neurological Injuries

Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) from combat or training

Psychological Disorders

PTSD and other mental health conditions from traumatic experiences





Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A **traumatic brain injury (TBI)** is structural damage to the brain resulting from sudden injury, frequently from combat.

Loss of Balance

Difficulty maintaining equilibrium

Slurred Speech

Difficulty articulating words

Disorientation

Confusion about time, place, or situation

Irritability

Heightened emotional responses

❏ **Important:** Symptoms of TBI may mimic behaviors of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

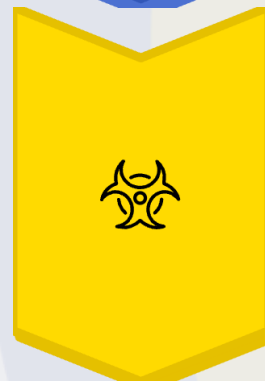


Interacting With Veterans



Gain Their Trust

Build trust to increase cooperation and achieve success in your interaction



Do Not Corner the Person

Avoid cornering unless it's a dangerous situation requiring forceful engagement. Combat veterans will choose to battle if cornered—that is their training

If you cannot reach an understanding, consider requesting backup from another officer with a military background.



Negative Coping Behaviors in Veterans

1

Substance Use

Using drugs or alcohol to escape problems, sleep, or make symptoms go away

2

Avoidance

Avoiding situations, people, or reminders of trauma, leading to isolation

3

Hypervigilance

Constantly on guard for danger, causing stress, fear, and exhaustion

4

Anger and Violence

Losing temper easily and making careless choices

5

Dangerous Behavior

Engaging in unsafe activities like fighting or reckless driving

6

Overworking

Working excessively to avoid thinking about trauma



Lesson 5: Serving the Homeless

According to Florida Statutes, **homeless** is defined as a person who does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Unsheltered

People living in places not meant for human habitation—on streets, in cars, wooded areas, or abandoned buildings

Sheltered

People staying in homeless shelters or transitional housing until finding stable permanent housing

Understanding Homelessness

The experience of homelessness is traumatic, and daily survival is a challenge. People who are homeless are less likely to connect with community health care resources, engage fully in employment and education, or have stable relationships with friends and family.

Homelessness worsens preexisting health problems, reduces the speed and likelihood of recovery, and exposes people to more health threats. Many homeless people are vulnerable and easy targets for crime but are often reluctant to report crimes.





Responding to People Who Are Homeless

Being homeless is not a crime, and it is rarely a choice.

As an officer, you can provide information about services instead of making an arrest when interacting with people who are homeless. Treat them with dignity and respect and be aware of their civil rights at all times.

Transporting a homeless person to an alternate location, such as a faith-based organization with outreach or shelter services, may eliminate the original concern. Become familiar with local resources, including shelters and social programs provided through crisis intervention teams (CIT).

Lesson 6: Americans With Disabilities Act

The **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)** is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, and transportation.

As a law enforcement officer, you must understand the requirements of the ADA to effectively interact with people who have a disability.



ADA Definition of Disability

According to the ADA, a person with a disability is someone who:

Has an Impairment

A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity

Has a Record

Has a record of such an impairment

Is Regarded

Is regarded as having such an impairment



Major Life Activities and Impairments

Major Life Activities

- Caring for oneself
- Performing manual tasks
- Walking, seeing, hearing, speaking
- Breathing, learning, working
- Sitting, standing, lifting
- Thinking, concentrating
- Interacting with others

Examples of Impairments

- Back or spinal injuries
- Psychiatric or mental disabilities
- Neurological impairments
- Extremity impairments
- Heart impairments
- Hearing, vision, speech impairments
- Blood disorders

Protecting Rights of People With Disabilities

Chapter 825, F.S., defines a **disabled adult** as a person 18 years or older who suffers from a condition of physical or mental incapacitation due to developmental disability, organic brain damage, mental illness, or who has physical or mental limitations that restrict normal activities of daily living.

People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else, and you must protect these rights.





Special Considerations for Miranda Rights

- ❏ Some people with disabilities may not understand *Miranda* rights as usually explained, especially in stressful situations.

1

Explain Clearly

Explain rights so the person can understand them

2

Consider Limitations

Keep in mind limited vocabulary and understanding of rights concept

3

Have Support Present

Include relative, friend, attorney, or agency staff when appropriate

4

Document

Record interview, document disability, inform state attorney's office and corrections

Service Animals Under the ADA

A **service animal** is defined as a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. The task(s) must be directly related to the person's disability.

Examples of Service Animal Tasks

- Guiding a person who is blind
- Alerting a person who is deaf
- Alerting and protecting during seizures
- Reminding about medications
- Calming during anxiety attacks





Questioning About Service Animals

If it is not obvious that an animal is a service animal, you may ask only two specific questions:

Question 1

Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?

Question 2

What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

A person with a service animal is entitled to freely access public areas. If you arrest a person with a service animal, arrange care for the animal—preferably with family, friend, or kennel rather than animal control.

Lesson 7: Serving People With Physical Impairments

A **physical or mobility impairment** is a functional limitation that affects one or more of a person's limbs. People may have limited use of extremities for walking, grasping, or lifting objects.



Mobility Impairment Considerations

Assistive Devices

May use braces, canes, or wheelchairs to move around

Medical Conditions

May have arthritis or tendonitis prohibiting movement, sitting, or reaching

Communication Tips

Maintain good eye contact and ask if person would like assistance before providing it

Respect Independence

Not all people with mobility impairments need or want help—don't be offended if declined

Vision Impairment

Vision impairment is a loss or partial loss of sight that cannot be corrected by usual means, such as glasses.

Blindness

Functional loss of vision—applies to people who cannot see at all (cannot distinguish light from dark) and people who have some vision in one or both eyes

Partial Sight

Visual impairment where objects still look dim or out of focus after correction. May not see color well or lack peripheral vision but can still see and read with aids





Interacting With People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired



Identify Yourself

State directions and instructions clearly and completely



Read Aloud

State visual information and read documents in full or provide large-print versions



Describe Procedures

Explain what you are going to do in advance (photos, fingerprints, etc.)



Provide Accommodations

Instead of pointing, take them to the location or describe it specifically



Reassure Victims

If victim of assault, reassure them that assailant is no longer present



Hearing Impairment

A **hearing impairment** is any degree of hearing loss with two classifications:

Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss but not to the extent of relying primarily on visual communication. Hearing aids may increase ability to hear sound but not necessarily understand words.

Deafness

Severe hearing loss to the extent that the person must rely primarily on visual tools such as writing, sign language, and lip reading to communicate.

Recognizing Hearing Impairment

- ❏ Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing may have poor balance or slurred speech and may appear to be intoxicated.

They are generally attentive to their surroundings as their eyes must see what their ears cannot hear. They may compensate with heightened visual awareness and often indicate they cannot hear by pointing to ears or mouth, shaking head "no," or making other movements.



Interacting With People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

1

Gain Attention

Light touch on arm to avoid startled response. State their name before beginning conversation.

2

Face and Maintain Eye Contact

Speak clearly, slowly, and distinctly using appropriate volume without shouting.

3

Avoid Exaggeration

Don't shout or exaggerate mouth movements—this distorts speech.

4

Use Simple Language

Avoid complex sentences and quickly changing topics. Find different ways to say things if not understood.

5

Take Turns Speaking

Pay attention to expressions and body language. Puzzled look may indicate misunderstanding.

6

Assess Understanding

Have them repeat back what they understood. Have them write down specific information.

Environmental and Communication Aids

Environmental Considerations

- Minimize extraneous noises
- Avoid dimly lit rooms
- Ensure person understands everything said to third parties

Communication Aids

- Certified sign language interpreter
- Pen and paper (save as evidence)
- Cell phone applications
- Computer or TDD/TTY
- Assistive listening device
- Record all exchanges



Miranda Rights for Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Critical: When advising a person who is deaf or hard of hearing of their *Miranda* rights, provide their rights in a manner understood by them, such as in writing or by using a sign language interpreter.

If the person requests a sign language interpreter during a *Miranda* situation, you may not continue to question them until the interpreter appears. People who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot knowingly waive their rights unless the warning is given in a format they understand.

According to the ADA, a person who is deaf or hard of hearing has the right to choose what kind of communication help they need.

Speech Impairment

A **speech impairment** is a physiological condition that causes difficulty in producing sound or understandable language. It can result from hearing loss, neurological disorder, brain injury, or physical impairments such as cleft lip or palate.

Voice Disorders

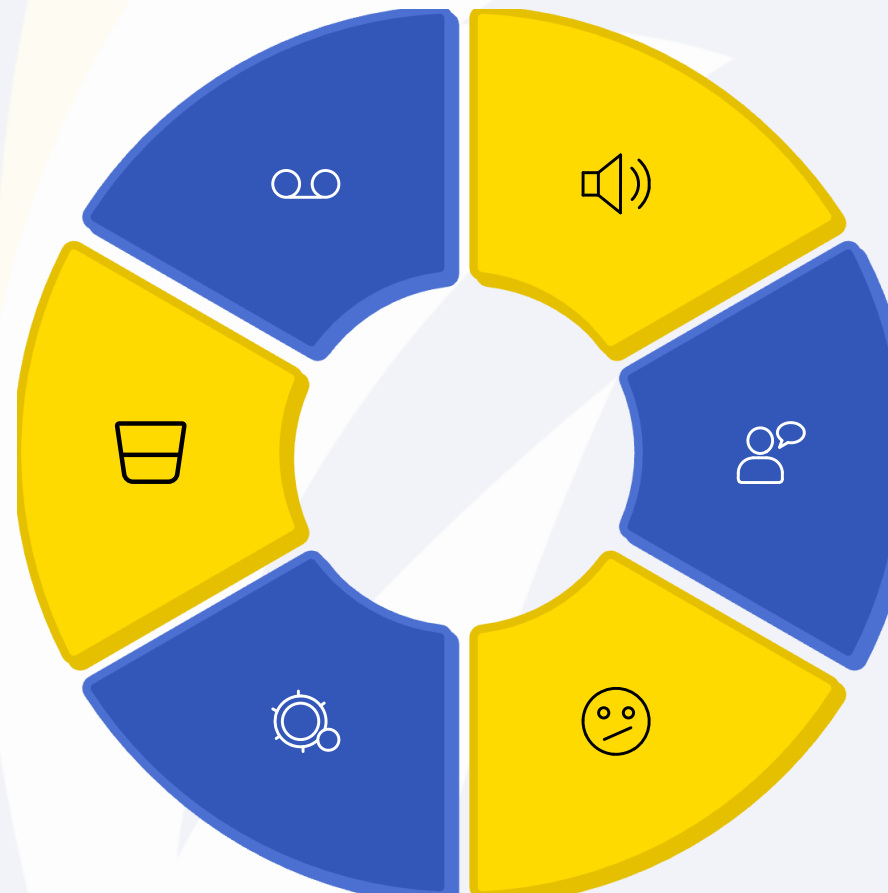
Sound Disorders

Mumbling

Stuttering

Lisping

Slurring





Communicating With Speech Impairments

If you have trouble understanding someone's speech in a non-confrontational incident:

Ask for Help

Request assistance from family members, friends, or neighbors if available

Use Written Communication

Use pen and paper or electronic device (not personal cell phone)

Request Repetition

Ask the person to repeat what was said

Document

Save paper as evidence or document use of electronic device



Lesson 8: Serving People With Developmental Disabilities

Florida Statutes define a **developmental disability** as a disorder or syndrome attributable to cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida, Down syndrome, Phelan-McDermid syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, or intellectual disability. It manifests before age 18, constitutes a substantial handicap, and continues indefinitely.

Characteristics of Developmental Disabilities



Functional Limitations

May affect intellectual functioning and make it harder to learn.

Substantial limitations in major life activities such as self-care, learning, mobility, and independent living.



Communication Challenges

Limited vocabulary, possible speech impairment, difficulty understanding or answering questions, short attention span.



Need for Support

May require assistance with daily activities and economic self-sufficiency. Symptoms vary for each person depending on condition.

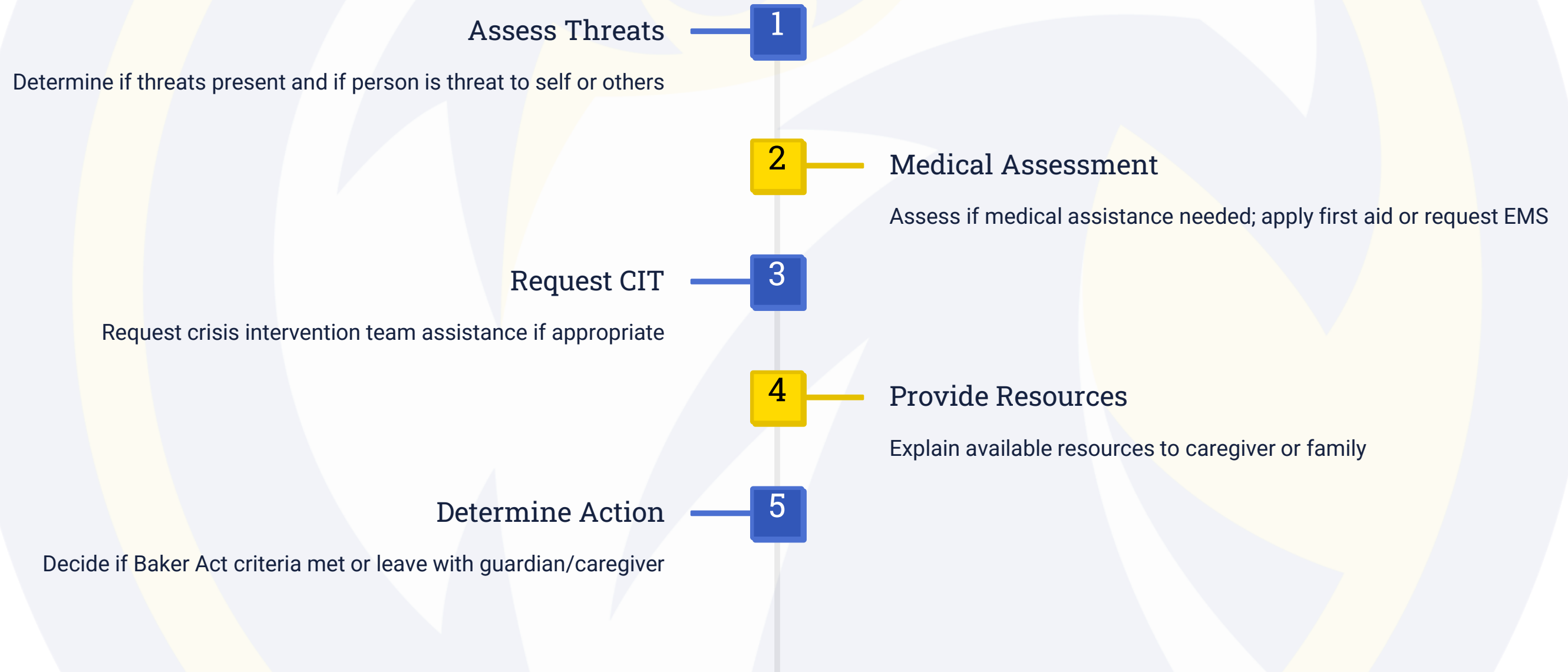


Interacting With People With Developmental Disabilities

- **Allow Extra Time**
Provide additional time to exchange information
- **Speak Directly**
Address the person directly, not their caregiver
- **Focus on Abilities**
Respect abilities rather than focusing on disabilities
- **Respect Personal Space**
May be sensitive to physical contact, lights, and sounds
- **Identify Stimuli**
Gather information to eliminate aggravating stimuli (caretaker, object, noise, animal)
- **Interview Witnesses**
Interview people at scene and observe actions of person with developmental disability



Response Protocol for Developmental Disabilities



Intellectual Disabilities

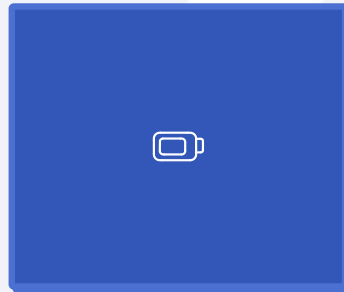
Intellectual disabilities are types of developmental disabilities that are lifelong conditions characterized by slow intellectual development. They can be caused by genetic conditions, illness, or injury.

These disabilities cannot be cured, but using appropriate modifications and accommodations can enhance a person's capabilities and independence. People with intellectual disabilities may be vulnerable to crimes of opportunity.

Special Education

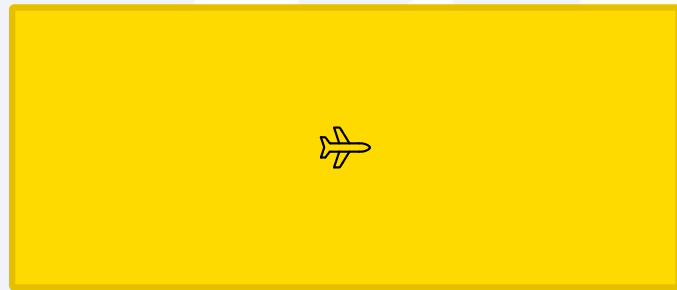


Levels of Intellectual Disability



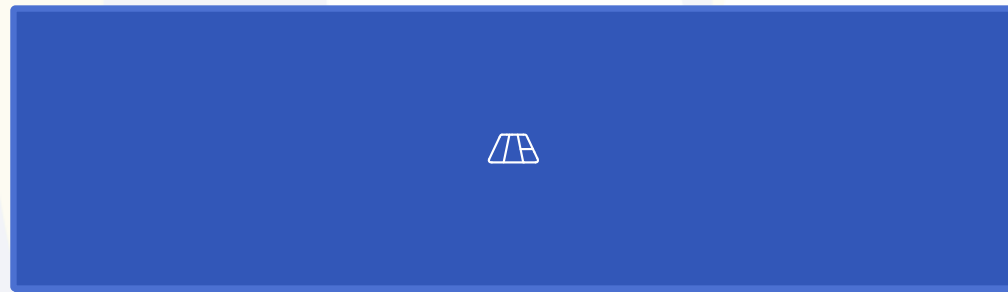
Mild

Can learn academic and prevocational skills, work in community. May not understand long-term consequences but realize when done something wrong.



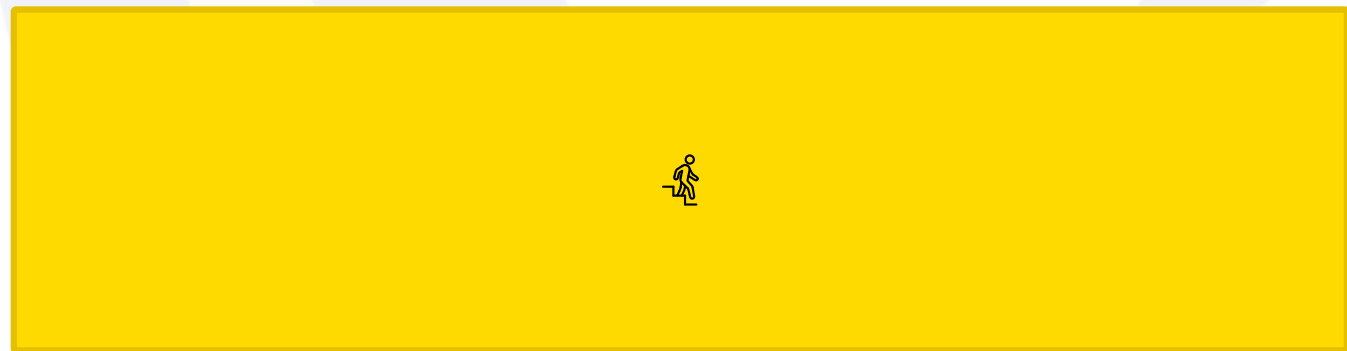
Moderate

Can achieve primary education, perform semiskilled work under supervision. May be easily frustrated with unfamiliar surroundings. May not grasp significance of actions.



Severe

Slow motor development and communication skills. Frequently under close supervision in group home setting. May not be fully capable of independent living.



Profound

Require constant care and supervision. May or may not have well-developed basic speech. Generally deal with caregiver rather than person directly.

Interacting With People With Intellectual Disabilities



Dignity and Respect

Refrain from imposing labels; defer to their preferred terminology. Treat with dignity and respect.



Simple Communication

Use simple, short sentences to increase likelihood of understanding. Ask them to repeat to show full understanding.




Additional Time

Provide extra time to respond to questions. Be patient throughout interaction.



Caregiver Support

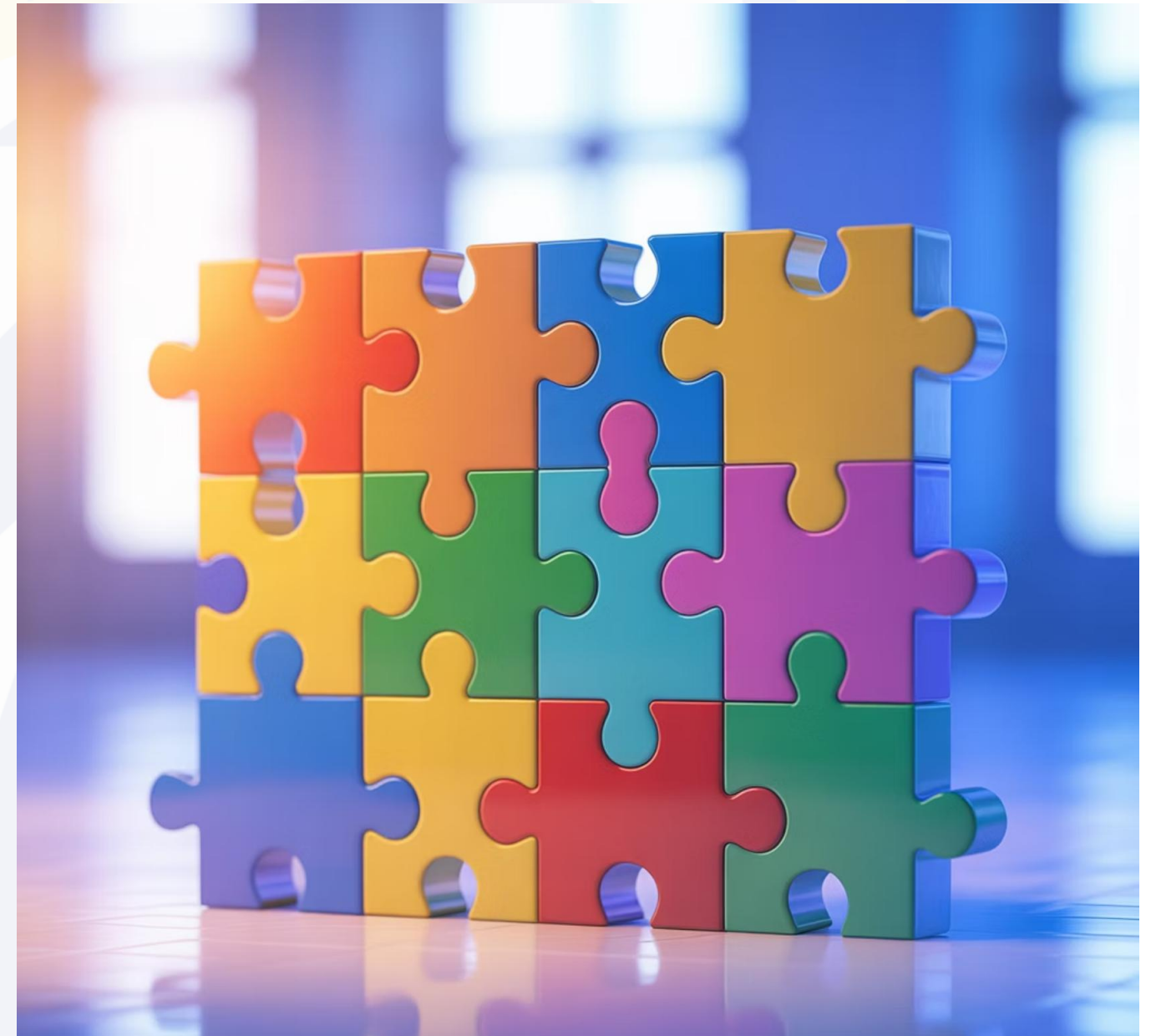
Caregiver may provide reassurance, have calming effect, or take extra safety precautions.

 **Important:** People with intellectual disabilities may not distinguish between abstract and concrete thought and might confess to crimes they did not commit. They may be easily intimidated and eager to please authority figures.

Lesson 9: Serving People With Autism

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder diagnosed in early childhood and continuing throughout adulthood. It is characterized by language and social development delay and repetitive behaviors.

Every person on the autism spectrum is unique with a variety of symptoms. Some can live independently and show no external characteristics while others require consistent support to function in daily life.





Recognizing Autism Characteristics

Limited Eye Contact

May avoid or have difficulty maintaining eye contact during conversation

Response Difficulties

May have difficulty responding to questions or following directions

Echoing

May repeat your words, also called echoing

Self-Stimulating Behaviors

Body rocking, hand flapping, skin picking, hair twirling, finger flicking (stimming)

Self-Injurious Behaviors

Hand biting, self-rubbing, head banging, or scratching



Interacting With People on the Autism Spectrum

The sooner you determine you are interacting with an autistic person, the sooner you can modify communication to de-escalate or avoid escalating a situation.

1

Don't Assume Mental Capacity

Autism does not indicate intellectual disability

2

Watch for Unusual Movements

Be patient if they become upset at stressful moments

3

Avoid Sarcasm and Figurative Language

Use literal, clear communication

4

Allow Extra Time

Provide additional time to answer questions

5

Clarify and Check Understanding

Ensure comprehension throughout interaction

6

Minimize Distractions

Reduce lights, sirens, loud crowds, barking dogs

7

Use Patience

Don't take their behavior personally



Safety Concerns With ASD in Custody

Evaluate for Injuries

Indications of pain may not be apparent—check thoroughly

Watch Breathing

Poor muscle tone may pose suffocation risk when restrained

Alert Detention Facility

Inform facility of ASD so they can take appropriate safety steps

Refer to Resources

Department of Children and Families, mental health facility, CARD, Autism Society of Florida

Lesson 10: Serving People With Mental Illnesses

As defined by Florida Statutes, **mental illness** is an impairment of the mental or emotional processes that exercise conscious control of one's actions. It may hinder a person's ability to perceive or understand reality.

Mental illness is not directly related to intelligence and occurs in people of all intellectual abilities. It is different from developmental disabilities—mental illness refers to disturbances in how people process thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and can occur at any time in life.



Types of Mental Illness

Thought Disorders

Disturbance in ability to create logical sequence of ideas. May include hallucinations (seeing/hearing things not present) or delusions (false beliefs firmly held). Example: schizophrenia.

Anxiety Disorders

Frequent, intense, long-lasting anxiety affecting daily function. May experience panic attacks with racing heartbeat, sweating, chest pain, feeling of impending doom. Example: OCD.

Mood Disorders

Emotional disturbances with long periods of excessive sadness (depression) or joyousness (mania). May be profoundly sad, suicidal, or have exaggerated sense of self. Examples: MDD, bipolar disorder.

Personality Disorders

Deeply ingrained, inflexible pattern of relating and behaving. May lie, exploit, lack empathy, have no regard for right or wrong. Examples: ASPD, NPD.



Responding to People With Mental Illnesses

When responding to incidents involving people with mental illness, your concerns should be the same as any other situation. Determine the nature of the environment, what has happened, and who is involved. **People with mental illness have the same rights as anyone else.**

Get Information from Dispatch

Obtain as much information as possible about the person and situation

Respond Appropriately

Unless violent crime or dangerous weapon involved, respond as you would to anyone else

Establish Yourself as Helper

Slow down contact and position yourself as helper rather than enforcer

Speak to Others

Gather information on characteristics, behavior, relationship to complainant, weapons availability, prior contact, mental health history

Minimize Emergency Equipment

Turn off lights and sirens upon arrival—can heighten anxiety and hinder calming efforts

Exhibit Caring Attitude

Avoid being authoritarian, overbearing, condescending, or intimidating. Be empathetic and use reflective listening.

Your actions may have long-term impact on the person's perceptions toward law enforcement.



Responding to a Person in Crisis

A comprehensive training guide for law enforcement officers on recognizing, responding to, and intervening in crisis situations while maintaining safety, professionalism, and respect.



Unit 2: Course Overview

1

Lesson 1: Crisis Situations

Recognizing and responding to crisis situations with respect and impartiality

3

Lesson 3: Suicide Risk

Safe intervention in potential suicide situations

5

Lesson 5: The Marchman Act

Criteria and action for substance abuse services

2

Lesson 2: The Baker Act

Criteria and procedures for psychiatric evaluation referrals

4

Lesson 4: Substance Abuse

Recognizing illnesses that mimic substance abuse and treatment stages

6

Lesson 6: Transportation and Documentation

Proper procedures for transport and incident documentation



Unit 2, Lesson 1: Crisis Situations

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to recognize and respond to a person in crisis while remaining respectful and impartial.



Think About This

You respond to a call from a convenience store about a person in the parking lot who is pacing back and forth. He is sweating, has clenched fists, and appears to be very angry. The store clerk asked if he was OK, and he didn't respond. What could this person's behavior indicate?



Your Role as First Responder

Social service agencies are not qualified to enter extreme crisis situations, so law enforcement officers must respond to these incidents and are often the first on the scene. You may need to interact with community agencies to manage and resolve conflicts and make referrals to the appropriate agencies.

Crisis intervention is one of your most important duties as a law enforcement officer. During a crisis, you have the duty to recognize, respond, and intervene safely, professionally, and effectively. A person in crisis might not have any help other than what you can provide. Each intervention is important to the person in crisis, their family, and the community.





LE621.1: Your Role During a Crisis

Ensure Safety

Protect all people involved in the situation

Provide Assistance

Help the person or people in distress

Restore Peace

Maintain or restore order to the situation

Act on Violations

Address any law violations appropriately

Document

Record the incident as appropriate

You may encounter a crisis situation in various ways: receiving a call for service from dispatch, observing a situation while on patrol, or having crisis calls develop out of another call.



Characteristics of a Crisis Situation

Crisis intervention is a potentially hazardous part of your duties as a law enforcement officer. The correct response to a crisis might require timely intervention, effective management of the incident, and referral to appropriate services.

If unmanaged, a conflict can quickly evolve into a crisis. A **crisis** is a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger especially when the affected person feels unprepared and pressured to take action or to make a decision. However, a crisis is also defined by the person's perception of and response to the event. If the person sees the event as significant and threatening, has used all of their coping strategies without success, and is unaware of or unable to pursue other alternatives, then a state of crisis exists.



LE621.2: Identifying Crisis Situations

Death of a Loved One

Loss and grief can trigger crisis responses

Serious Health Issues

Medical emergencies or diagnoses

Financial Loss

Economic hardship and instability

Job Loss

Unemployment and career disruption

Separation from Family

Isolation from support networks

Natural Disasters

Environmental emergencies and displacement

House Fires

Property loss and trauma

Vehicle Accidents

Traumatic events and injuries

Understanding Perception

Do not minimize or judge a person's reaction to a situation. You may not perceive the situation as a crisis; however, the person experiencing the crisis may see it as a traumatic event.

For example, a traffic stop is a normal everyday occurrence for an officer, but it may be a crisis situation for the person who is stopped.



LE621.3: Factors Influencing Crisis Response



Economic Factors

Financial stability, savings, employment prospects, and economic security significantly impact how a person responds to crisis situations.



Social Support

Family networks, friendships, community connections, and available support systems influence crisis management.



Physical Considerations

Physical health, medical conditions, and bodily stress impact a person's ability to cope with crisis.



Personal Dynamics

Individual coping mechanisms, past experiences, resilience, and personal history shape crisis responses.



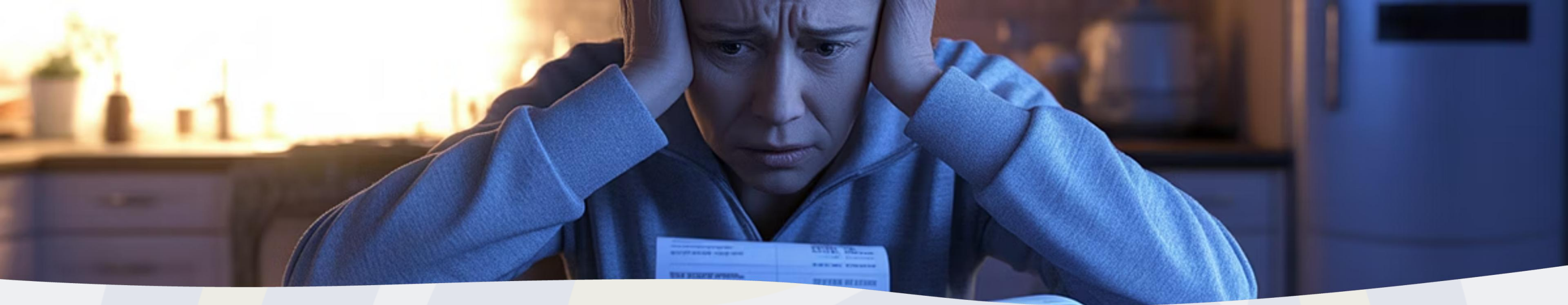
Psychological Elements

Mental health status, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being affect crisis perception and response.



Self-Image Impact

How a crisis affects a person's self-image and community standing can significantly influence their response.



Crisis Response Example

Consider a person who recently lost their job. Their response may be more severe if they have additional stressors in their life, such as:

- Little money held in savings
- Poor prospects of finding another job before the next mortgage payment is due
- Their sense of self-worth is tied to their job

When these factors are present, the person might be more susceptible to crisis than a person who has a support network and the financial stability to go without income while searching for a new job.



LE621.4: Behavioral Characteristics of a Person in Crisis

Verbal Indicators

- Anger
- Cursing
- Making threats
- Shouting

Physical Signs

- Flushed face
- Heavy or rapid breathing
- Clenching and unclenching of fists
- Pacing
- Pointing fingers
- Tightening the lips
- Clenching the teeth
- Sweating
- Unreal calmness

The effect of the crisis and stress on a person may cause a diminished capacity for thinking and decision-making.



LE621.5: Interacting with a Person in Crisis

When interacting with a person in crisis, observe their behavior before taking any legal action, such as arrest, or before applying the Baker Act or the Marchman Act. You may need to call for a crisis intervention team (CIT). Realize that not every instance requires legal action on your part; some crises can be resolved through effective communication.

Validate Feelings

Summarize their thoughts and feelings to help them feel validated

Use Empathy

Use an empathetic, non-judgmental tone

Avoid Minimizing

Avoid minimizing their problems or giving advice

Don't Blame

Avoid placing blame or criticizing their situation

Offer Help

Ask how you can help



Phases of a Crisis

Understanding different phases of a crisis will help you when interacting with people in crisis.

1

Phase 1: Loss of Control

The person realizes they are unable to cope with the situation. Life may be out of control, emotions high, and reasoning ability low. Emotions can range from anger to rage or from fear to panic, all leading to confusion.

2

Phase 2: Failed Resolution

The person struggles to resolve the situation using methods that have previously worked in a similar situation but do not in this instance. The person's failure to resolve the problem may lead to emotional blockage.

3

Phase 3: Overwhelmed

The person is unable to solve the crisis and is overwhelmed by emotions. They may be unable to cope with the situation rationally, and the inability to cope combined with the loss of problem-solving skills may lead to diminished self-esteem. A downward cycle may begin thus interfering with their ability to cope.

4

Phase 4: Openness to Help

The person is open to suggestions and willing to try new options. They may begin to explain what the situation personally means and may begin to find answers.

Crisis Intervention and Referral

As an officer, you must decide if a person involved in a crisis can continue to safely care for themselves or if they must be removed from the situation for their safety.

When dealing with a person in crisis, you must answer the following questions:

Self-Care Capability

Can the person care for themselves?

Threat Assessment

Are they a threat to themselves or others?





LE621.6: Types of Crisis Intervention

Safe Relocation

Relocating the person to a safe environment

Custody

Taking the person into custody if they have committed a crime

Involuntary Treatment

Initiating an involuntary treatment referral via the Baker Act or Marchman Act

Service Referral

Making a referral for services

Transportation

Arranging for or providing transportation as necessary



Mental Health Facility

Unit 2, Lesson 2: The Baker Act

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to identify the criteria and action to take when interacting with a person who qualifies for services under the Baker Act.

Think About This

You respond to a call where a mother and daughter are present. The mother states that her daughter is threatening suicide. What actions would you take to prevent the risk of harm?





LE622.1: The Baker Act Overview

You may respond to a call for service involving a person demonstrating that they are a danger to themselves or others. The Florida Mental Health Act of 1971, also referred to as the Florida Baker Act—or simply the **Baker Act**—provides people who have a mental illness, or who may harm or neglect themselves or others, with an emergency service and temporary detention for psychiatric evaluation and voluntary or involuntary short-term inpatient treatment.

- ❏ **Important:** Avoid using the Baker Act to deal with difficult people; instead, use it for people who you have determined are a danger to themselves or to others. If you have determined the Baker Act is necessary, do not delay in implementing it; recognize that you are attempting to prevent self-harm, suicide, or another violent act.



Voluntary vs. Involuntary Examination

Voluntary Examination

A **voluntary examination** is the decision by a person to willingly seek a psychiatric evaluation for symptoms that may be due to mental illness.

If a person is willing to seek treatment, ask them to submit to a voluntary examination. The person must be competent to make the decision and be at least 18 years old.

If the person has been found to be incapacitated or incompetent to consent for admission or treatment, or if the person is younger than 18, ask the person's guardian for consent.

Involuntary Examination

When a person refuses voluntary examination or is unable to determine for themselves whether examination is necessary, involuntary examination may be required.

The law requires that a person be extended the same rights whether under voluntary or involuntary status.

All personal identifying information must be kept confidential and exempt from disclosure.



LE622.2: Criteria for the Baker Act

The Florida Statutes state that a person may be taken to a receiving facility for involuntary examination under the Baker Act if there is reason to believe that the person has a mental illness and, because of their mental illness:

1

Refusal or Inability

The person has refused voluntary examination after receiving a thorough explanation and disclosure of the purpose of the examination, or is unable to determine for themselves whether the examination is necessary

2

Danger Without Care

Without care or treatment, the person meets one of the following conditions:



Baker Act Criteria: Danger Conditions

Harm to Self or Others

The person is likely to cause serious bodily harm to themselves or others in the near future, as evidenced by recent behavior

Neglect or Refusal of Self-Care

The person suffers from neglect or refuses to care for themselves; such neglect or refusal poses a real and present threat of substantial harm to their wellbeing; and it is not apparent that such harm may be avoided through the help of willing family members or friends or the provision of other services

Example: An elderly person is not caring for themselves by bathing or eating.

- ❏ When a law enforcement agency receives notification that a person has communicated a specific threat to cause serious bodily injury or death to an identified person, appropriate action must be taken to prevent the risk of harm. This includes notifying the intended victim of the threat or initiating an RPO.



LE622.3: Initiating a Mental Health Evaluation

The Baker Act provides several options for initiating a mental health evaluation:

Voluntary Treatment

The person volunteers to receive treatment

Court Petition

The court is petitioned for an ex parte order (a court order issued and signed by a judge that is initiated by one person in the absence of and without representation or notification of other parties)

Officer-Initiated

The officer takes the person into custody, initiating an involuntary admission, and transports the person to the nearest receiving facility for a mental health evaluation

Professional Certificate

A physician, clinical psychologist, psychiatric nurse, mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, or clinical social worker executes a certificate stating that the person meets the criteria for examination under the Baker Act



LE622.4: Assessing for Baker Act Referral

Determining if a person should be referred or taken into custody for a voluntary or involuntary psychiatric evaluation during a crisis depends on the specific situation. How the person interacts with you and with other people on the scene will help you decide if taking the person into custody is the appropriate course of action.

Crime Assessment

Has a crime occurred? If so, what was the nature of the offense, and what does the law say about it?

Housing Status

Does the person have a residence or stable housing?

Support System

Does the person have an established support system within the community?



Assessment Process

Situations that involve the Baker Act have the potential to be volatile, and backup is highly recommended. Interview the person, the complainant, and any witnesses to gather information, and use this information to determine if you should take the person into custody under the Baker Act.

When making contact with the person, use effective interpersonal skills to establish rapport. Assess the person's mental status by evaluating the following factors:

- The person's environment
- The behavior of and statements made by the person
- Any self-inflicted injury of the person
- The complainant's or witness' statements

If needed, provide first aid and request EMS. After taking the person into custody, deliver them or have them delivered to a designated receiving facility. You must complete documentation, provide it to the receiving facility, and include it in your report.



Unit 2, Lesson 3: Suicide Risk

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to safely intervene in a potential suicide situation.

Think About This

You respond to a call and see a person standing on the ledge of a bridge. Upon initiating a conversation, you learn that he is unable to pay his bills and support his family. He says, "I just can't do this anymore." What considerations do you have as you interact with this person?





Understanding Suicide Threats

As an officer responding to a situation where a person is suicidal, you must remain aware of officer safety issues while also providing intervention. Be aware that an existing suicidal situation may be aggravated through the inappropriate handling of a distraught person. Suicide threat calls are life-threatening situations for everyone involved.

People with suicidal intentions have a diminished perceived value of life and may be more inclined to harm others. There are a variety of indicators and observations that you can use to assess a person's risk for suicide. A person with suicidal intentions may talk about committing suicide, attempt intentional self-injury, write suicide notes, or sketch death-related drawings.

- ❏ **Critical:** If a person talks about committing suicide, attempting self-injury, or formulating or has formulated a suicide plan, take them seriously.



LE623.1: Indicators of Suicide Risk

Emotional Factors

- Despairing over the loss of a loved one
- Depression from life stressors
- Feeling that their future is hopeless
- Obsessive talk about death

Behavioral Changes

- Giving away personal belongings
- Losing appetite
- Engaging in self-destructive behaviors (drinking, using drugs, self-cutting)
- Intentional self-injury

Not all people at risk for suicide show violence or anger; some can seem eerily calm. Most initial attempts do not result in death and are often a cry for help; however, always take an attempt seriously and use appropriate caution.



LE623.2: Interacting with a Person at Risk for Suicide

Communicating with a person at risk for suicide is a vital part of the intervention process.

Establish Rapport

Try to establish rapport and keep the person talking

Listen Carefully

Listen carefully to what they are saying and how they are saying it

Show Support

Show support, empathy, and interest by talking directly to them without judgment

Convey Hope

Convey patience, reassurance, and hope

Assess Threat Level

Listen carefully to learn how serious and immediate the suicide threat is and possibly what method the person plans to use

Observe Body Language

Observe their body language to become aware of their motivation for suicide and willingness to accept intervention

Ask Direct Questions

Consider asking the person whether they are thinking of killing themselves and, if so, how they would do it

Pre-Arrival Preparation

Before arriving at a scene with a person at risk for suicide, you should:



Request Assistance

Request additional officers, EMS, or a CIT



Coordinate

Coordinate responsibilities and tactics with other responding officers and EMS



Gather Information

Request dispatch information about weapons at the scene, the person's intended method of suicide, the person's location and call history





LE623.3: On-Scene Intervention

Once on scene, immediately determine if the person has access to weapons. Be aware that the person could initiate a sudden attack on you or others. If there is no immediate threat to yourself or others, attempt to talk to the person.

Clear the Scene

Clear the scene of bystanders and any weapons or potential weapons

Provide First Aid

Perform first aid and request EMS as necessary

Attempt De-escalation

If attempts to speak to the person do not de-escalate the situation, use appropriate tactics, equipment, and verbal commands

Remove from Danger

Remove the person from danger to a place of safety and remove any aggravating stimuli and onlookers. Do not leave the person alone



Use of Force Considerations

Avoid intentionally exposing yourself to unnecessary danger to disarm a suicidal person. You can use less lethal weapons, such as pepper spray, as the situation dictates. These situations can be volatile, and you may have to resort to deadly force.

- ❏ **Suicide by Cop:** Some people may attempt to end their lives by intentionally provoking officers to use deadly force. This is commonly referred to as **suicide by cop**.

A suicidal person needs evaluation from a medical or mental health service provider as soon as possible. If the person appears to meet the criteria for involuntary examination under the Baker Act, take them into custody and deliver them to the nearest facility. Notify the receiving facility of the possible suicide risk.



Available Resources

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) is a service available to anyone and may be contacted at any time by calling **988** or the previous phone number **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

Community Resources

Other community resources, friends, religious leaders, and relatives may also be available to assist a person contemplating suicide.



Unit 2, Lesson 4: Substance Abuse Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to recognize illnesses that mimic substance abuse and the stages of substance abuse and treatment.



Think About This

While on patrol in the early morning, you pull over a vehicle for running a red light. When speaking to the driver, you notice his speech is slurred, and he appears confused. How would you handle this situation?

The Changing Role of Law Enforcement

The nation's opioid epidemic is changing the way law enforcement does its job. Many law enforcement agencies are initiating programs aimed at treating people who abuse substances rather than putting them in jail. Officers play a critical role by targeting high-risk groups with prevention information and forming collaborations with public health agencies and drug treatment centers.



LE624.1: Substance Use vs. Substance Abuse

Substance Use

Substance use is the intake of a substance that can lead to substance abuse. It can be a legal therapeutic prescription or an illegal recreational use of the substance.

Examples:

- Having a casual drink with friends
- Taking a prescribed drug according to label directions
- Taking aspirin daily to prevent heart disease

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse (also referred to as substance misuse) is the inappropriate use of a substance that negatively affects the mind and body, adversely impacting a person's social or occupational life and psychological or physical health.

Examples:

- Misusing prescribed medication
- Binge drinking
- Sniffing or inhaling glue
- Using cocaine

Progression of Substance Abuse

1

Substance Use

Initial intake of a substance, legal or illegal

2

Substance Abuse

Inappropriate use negatively affecting mind, body, and life

3

Substance Dependence

Physical and psychological loss of control due to disruption of brain chemicals

4

Substance Addiction


Using a substance consistently in excess despite negative consequences



Understanding Overdose

Substance abuse can also lead to **overdose**, which is the accidental or intentional use of a dangerously large amount of a substance that can lead to death.

Drug overdose is often underreported out of fear of arrest. Friends and relatives of someone who struggles with substance abuse can be protective or ashamed of the person or may not want to get involved. However, when a person is overdosing, friends or family may contact law enforcement in an attempt to save their life.

 **Important Legal Protection:** Keep in mind that you cannot charge, prosecute, or penalize a person for possession of a controlled substance when someone acting in good faith seeks assistance for the person experiencing a drug-related overdose.



LE624.2: Illnesses That Mimic Substance Abuse

Some illnesses and medical conditions have symptoms that mimic characteristics of substance abuse. Keep the following conditions in mind:

Diabetic Conditions

Diabetic shock may cause a person to stagger and appear drunk; a diabetic coma may cause a person's breath to smell sweet, like a fruity alcoholic drink

Epilepsy

An epileptic episode may cause a person to appear as if they are in a drunken stupor or confused state; during a severe episode, the person can become violent for brief periods of time

High Blood Pressure

Can sometimes cause people to become temporarily irrational

Head Injury

May cause people to be confused and aggressive

Stroke

May cause a person to appear dizzy and confused, and they may vomit or lose consciousness

Parkinson's Disease

May cause a person to shake, slur their speech, or appear intoxicated



Additional Medical Conditions

Cerebral Palsy and Wernicke Syndrome

May cause a person to appear confused and have faulty muscular coordination or paralysis of the eye muscles

Degenerative Diseases

Alzheimer's and dementia may cause a person to stagger, act inappropriately, be forgetful, or wander aimlessly

Mental Health Issues

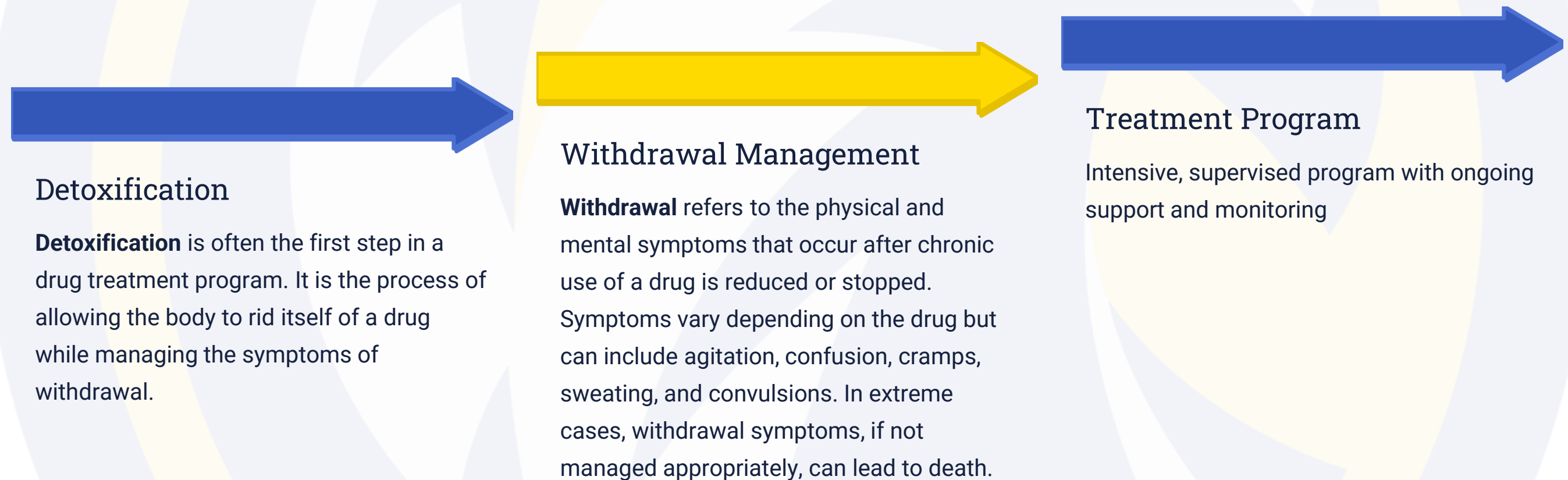
Can cause people to behave unpredictably and experience sensory hallucinations, such as sounds, physical sensations, or visions that can mimic the symptoms of substance abuse

Drug Interactions

Taking several prescriptions at one time can sometimes cause negative drug interactions that lead to symptoms imitating schizophrenia. An elderly person may accidentally abuse medications, potentially causing an overdose

LE624.3: Drug Treatment Programs

Some jurisdictions offer drug treatment court programs as a choice for people whose criminal charges are the result of substance abuse. Drug treatment court programs offer an opportunity for people who abuse substances to participate in an intensive, supervised program.



Available Resources

You should become familiar with the local resources available to people struggling with substance abuse in your community. Many communities host self-help groups such as:

Alcoholics Anonymous

Support group for alcohol
addiction recovery

Narcotics Anonymous

Support group for drug
addiction recovery

SMART Recovery

Science-based addiction recovery support





Unit 2, Lesson 5: The Marchman Act

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to identify the criteria for the Marchman Act and understand what action to take when interacting with a person who qualifies for services under the act.



Think About This

You respond to a call from a 60-year-old woman. She says that her 40-year-old son was fired from his job three months ago for attendance problems, and since that time, he has not been motivated to find a new job. He sometimes sleeps all day and night or stays awake for days at a time, and he often goes days without bathing. She is concerned there is a problem because of his behavior and that he is spending all his money on drugs. She wants to get him help but is not sure what to do. What are your possible interventions?

LE625.1: The Marchman Act Overview

You may respond to a call for service involving a person who is significantly impaired by drugs or alcohol and potentially harmful to themselves or to others. In these circumstances, you may place the person in protective custody under the Marchman Act.

The Hal S. Marchman Alcohol and Other Drug Services Act of 1993, commonly known as the **Marchman Act**, provides people in need of substance abuse services access to emergency services and temporary protected custody on either a voluntary or involuntary basis.

In a voluntary admission, a person decides to enter a treatment facility for substance abuse and seeks services directly from the provider.





LE625.2: Criteria for the Marchman Act

The Florida Statutes state the criteria for referring a person for involuntary admission into a facility under the Marchman Act.

A person may be referred or taken to a receiving facility for involuntary admission for substance abuse if there is good faith reason to believe that the person is substance abuse impaired or has a co-occurring mental health disorder and, because of such impairment or disorder, the person:

1

Loss of Self-Control

Has lost the power of self-control because of substance abuse

2

Meets One of These Conditions

Is either in need of substance abuse services with impaired judgment, or likely to suffer from neglect or has inflicted/threatened physical harm



Marchman Act Danger Conditions

Impaired Judgment

In need of substance abuse services, and their judgment has been so impaired that they are incapable of appreciating the need for services and of making a rational decision regarding the need for services

Neglect or Self-Harm

Likely to suffer from neglect or to refuse to take care of themselves; or the person has inflicted, has attempted or threatened to inflict, or, unless admitted, is likely to inflict physical harm on themselves, or another



Important: A person's refusal to receive services does not mean that they lack judgment for the need of services.



Other Marchman Act Situations

The Marchman Act also specifies other situations where you would take a person into protective custody or deliver them to a treatment facility. These situations may include:

Voluntary Treatment

The person volunteers to receive treatment

Court Petition

The court is petitioned for an ex parte order

The decision to arrest someone referred for voluntary or involuntary substance abuse or abuse services during an incident depends on the alleged crime and the person's state of being. As an officer, you will have to make your decisions on a case-by-case basis.



LE625.3: Implementing the Marchman Act

Situations involving the Marchman Act can be unpredictable, and backup is highly recommended. These calls may be initiated by the person, a family or household member, a member of the public, or by an officer who is at the scene with the person-at-risk.

Interview Witnesses

Interview the complainant or any witnesses who may be able to provide assistance in identifying the impaired person and the background and extent of their substance abuse

Assess Condition

Assess the person's physical condition through observation and their vital signs. If the impaired person is injured, incoherent, or nonresponsive, request assistance from EMS

Establish Contact

When making contact with the person, use effective interpersonal skills in an attempt to establish a dialogue

Determine Threat

Information from the initial assessment can assist you in determining if the impaired person is an immediate threat to themselves or others



Marchman Act: Custody and Documentation

After taking the impaired person into protective custody, deliver them to the appropriate or nearest designated receiving facility.

Complete the Department of Children and Families form for the receiving facility and detail the circumstances under which the person was taken into custody in your report.

According to Florida law, in the case of an adult, you are authorized to take the person to a detention facility within the jurisdiction.

Unit 2, Lesson 6: Transportation and Documentation

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to transport a person in crisis as well as document the incident on the proper form.





Think About This

You receive a call from the wife of a person who just lost his brother in a car accident. She indicates that he and his brother were best friends, and her husband has said he wants to kill himself. Upon initiating a conversation with the husband, you learn that he has access to a firearm, and he says, "I want to end everything." You have determined to initiate a Baker Act. What procedures do you need to follow?



LE626.1: Transporting a Person in Crisis

In addition to making a referral for services, you may have to transport a person suspected of having a mental illness or misusing substances to another location. Your agency will have a memorandum of understanding with receiving facilities that reflects a single set of protocols for the safe and secure transportation of the person and transfer of custody to a responsible person.

If a person is in need of psychiatric or substance abuse evaluation and treatment, you may arrange or provide for special transport to any of the following locations:



Mental Health Facility

Specialized psychiatric care



Hospital

Emergency medical services



Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

Specialized addiction services



Jail Facility

Secure detention when appropriate



Shelter or Safe House

Temporary protective housing

Transport Procedures

If the person is being assessed for the Baker Act or Marchman Act, follow your agency's policies and procedures regarding non-custodial transport and escort the person to the appropriate receiving facility.

- ❏ **Safety First:** Always follow your agency's protocols for safe and secure transportation. Ensure proper communication with the receiving facility before transport.





LE626.2: Required Documentation Forms

Documenting the incident might include the following forms:

Baker Act Form

Baker Act Report of Law Enforcement
Officer Initiating Involuntary
Examination **CF-MH 3052a**

Ex Parte Order

Baker Act Ex Parte Order for
Involuntary Examination **CF-MH 3100**

Marchman Act Forms

Agency-specific Marchman Act form(s)



Comprehensive Report Requirements

Your agency reports should be as detailed as possible and include the following information:

Person and Victim Information

- Actions and reactions
- Physical condition
- Appearance

Additional Details

- Witness statements
- Known medications
- Weapons involved
- Disposition of the incident

Documenting these incidents provides historical data and warns future responding officers of special hazards.



Key Takeaways: Crisis Intervention

Recognition

Identify behavioral characteristics and factors influencing crisis response

Response

Use effective communication, empathy, and appropriate intervention techniques

Legal Tools

Understand and properly apply Baker Act and Marchman Act criteria

Safety First

Protect yourself, the person in crisis, and the community

Documentation

Complete thorough reports and proper forms for all incidents

Resources

Connect people with appropriate community services and support



Your Role Makes a Difference

Crisis intervention is one of your most important duties as a law enforcement officer. A person in crisis might not have any help other than what you can provide. Each intervention is important to the person in crisis, their family, and the community.

Remember: Your professional, respectful, and effective response can save lives and connect people with the help they need.



Identifying and Responding to High-Risk Groups

A comprehensive training guide for recognizing and safely interacting with criminal gangs and extremist groups



Training Overview

Course Structure

1

Unit 3, Lesson 1

Criminal Gangs - Recognition and documentation of gang activity

2

Unit 3, Lesson 2

Extremist Groups - Identifying characteristics and ideologies

Unit 3, Lesson 1

Criminal Gangs

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to recognize indicators of gang activity and the importance of documenting observable identifiers.






Unit 3, Lesson 1

What is a Criminal Gang?

The Florida Statutes define a **criminal gang** as:

"Criminal gang" means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts, and that consists of three or more persons who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols, including, but not limited to, terrorist organizations and hate groups.

 **LE631.1:** Describe common characteristics of criminal gangs

- Theft, burglary, and fraud
- Narcotics manufacturing and distribution
- Assault and battery
- Racketeering and witness intimidation
- Extortion, vandalism, and arson
- Weapons and explosives
- Counterfeiting and homicide



Unit 3, Lesson 1

Gang Demographics

Age Range

Florida gangs are overwhelmingly comprised of young males between the ages of **13 and 23**

Background

May have experienced child abuse or neglect and often come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds

Common Traits

Often school dropouts, unemployed, and frequently in trouble with law enforcement





Unit 3, Lesson 1

Why People Join Gangs



Psychological Needs

A sense of structure and discipline in their lives



Self-Esteem

A sense of confidence in oneself and purpose



Safety

A sense of security and protection from threats



Fame

A sense of power and prestige within their community



Social Acceptance

A feeling of belonging and community



LE631.2: Identify reasons why some people join criminal gangs

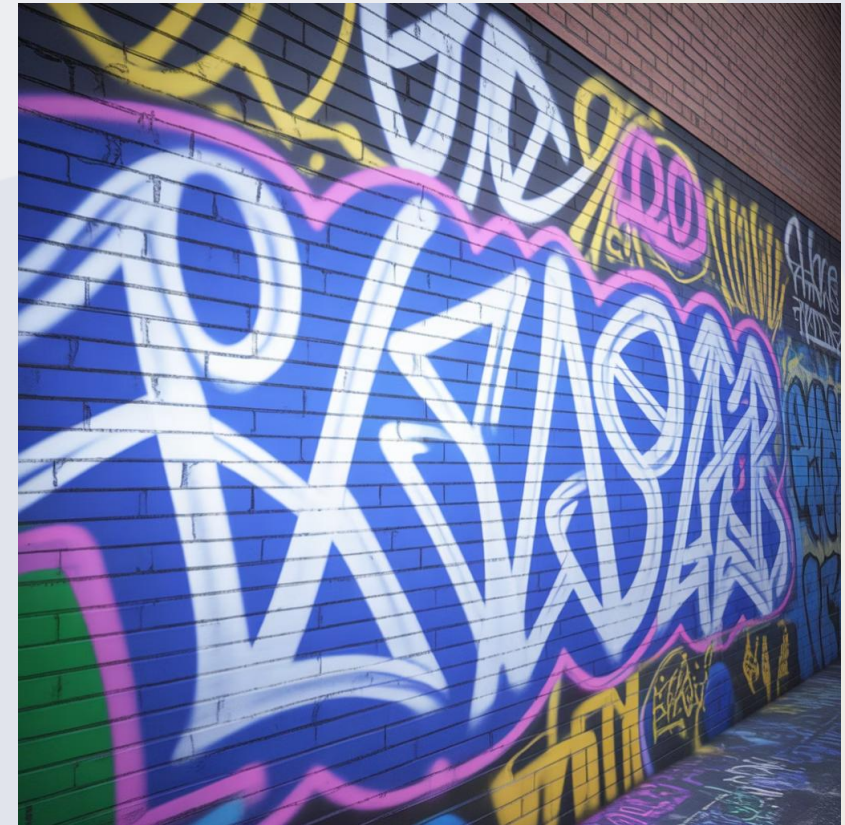
Unit 3, Lesson 1

Gang Organization and Purpose


Gangs may be organized for different reasons, such as race, ethnicity, territory, or tradition, and they often participate in similar types of criminal activity. Not all gangs have a formal organized structure, but they do generally serve the same purpose and participate in the same types of activities.

Gang members identify themselves and promote gang solidarity through the use of identifying symbols, such as:

- Graffiti and tagging
- Tattoos
- Hand signs
- Clothing and jewelry
- Colors
- Music



These identifiers have special significance to each gang, and members go to great lengths to protect them from degradation by rival gangs.

 **Important:** Become familiar with the types of gangs, gang identifiers, symbols, and activities in your community.



Unit 3, Lesson 1

Gang Initiation Process

Most gangs require new members to prove their loyalty to the gang and to solidify their membership through an initiation process. Often these acts include committing criminal or sexual activity or being subjected to violence.

Loyalty Test

New members must demonstrate unwavering commitment to the gang

Criminal Acts

Initiation may require participation in illegal activities

Violence

Members may be subjected to physical violence as part of initiation



Unit 3, Lesson 1

Officer Safety Considerations

Use extreme caution when dealing with gang members.





Unit 3, Lesson 1

Critical Safety Factors



Lack of Respect for Authority

Historically, gangs have very little respect for legal authority, and they typically do not honor the same rules and laws that govern society.



Silent Communication

Gang members have been known to use hand signs to silently communicate with other members to launch attacks against law enforcement.



Advanced Training

Some gang members may have paramilitary or law enforcement training, and others may be military veterans with advanced knowledge of combat and weapons tactics.

LE631.3: Explain officer safety issues when interacting with criminal gangs

Unit 3, Lesson 1

Home Field Advantage



Gang members often use the home field advantage of their neighborhoods or turfs against law enforcement when officers respond to calls for service.

Gang members tend to know their turfs better than law enforcement officers, and sometimes people within the neighborhood are sympathetic to gang members.

Best Practices

- Build rapport and engage with members of the community
- Do not make assumptions
- Observe and learn



Unit 3, Lesson 1

Documentation of Gang Activity



Make Contact

Encounter with gang member or suspected gang member



Document Identifiers

Note clothing, tattoos, and observable identifiers



Statutory Labeling

Documentation can be used to statutorily label as gang member



Prosecution

Used to enhance penalties in prosecutions

Documentation of gang activity is extremely important. Through documentation, a potential gang member can be statutorily labeled as a gang member. This documentation can then be used in prosecutions to enhance penalties.

☐ **LE631.4:** Explain why it is important to document known or suspected criminal gang activity

Unit 3, Lesson 1

Documenting Gang Members

What to Document

When you make contact with a gang member, or suspected gang member, you are encouraged to make notes to document:

- Clothing and colors worn
- Tattoos and their locations
- Any other observable identifiers
- Hand signs displayed
- Associates present

Many members are proud of their gang affiliation and will pose for photographs while showing hand signs.





Unit 3, Lesson 1

Monitoring Graffiti and Tagging

Closely monitoring graffiti and tagging can help you and other officers keep track of gang conflicts and identify which gangs are present in an area. Documenting these activities can aid in developing a roster of gang members.

1

Find Graffiti

Locate gang graffiti in your patrol area

3

Report

Report according to agency policies and procedures

2

Photograph

Document the graffiti with clear photographs

4

Remove

May include painting over graffiti per policy

Unit 3, Lesson 2

Extremist Groups

Lesson Goal

At the end of this lesson, you will know how to identify characteristics of extremist groups, their members, and associates.



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Think About This Scenario

While on patrol, you observe a vehicle that appears to have a license plate from an area you do not recognize. Upon further inspection, you see the plate reads, "No driver license or insurance required/private mode of travel." You initiate a traffic stop, and upon contact with the driver, he says, "I am a free man traveling about the land and I do not submit to your inquiry."

How would you handle this situation?



Characteristics of Extremist Groups

There are certain organized groups, often known as extremist groups, which advocate violence and the illegal disruption of the lawful activities of others. Although much of their rhetoric is an expression of First Amendment rights, it can cross over to advocating violence.

Be mindful that simply voicing antigovernment speech is not against the law, but seeking to advance that ideology through force or violence is illegal.





Unit 3, Lesson 2

Domestic Terrorism

Not Just Foreign Affairs

Terrorism is not isolated to foreign affairs. People who commit terrorist activities within the United States seek to intimidate the civilian population or influence the policy of government by intimidation or coercion.

Terrorist Objectives

They may also seek to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

White Supremacist Groups

White supremacist groups are a common terrorism group within the United States. These groups share the ideology that the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to those of other races. These groups may commit violent criminal acts toward other groups of people who share different ethnicities or ideas.

❏ **LE632.2:** Identify characteristics of domestic terrorism



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Sovereign Citizens

The **sovereign citizen** movement is a subculture of society that holds antigovernment beliefs and does not recognize federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or policies.

Sovereign citizens participate as individuals or in groups without established leadership; they usually come together only in loosely affiliated groups to train, help each other with paperwork, or socialize and talk about their ideology. They sometimes refer to themselves as "**constitutionalists**" or "**freemen**," which indicates their decision to not recognize federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or policies.

- ☐ **LE632.3:** Identify the ideology and characteristics of sovereign citizens



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Sovereign Citizen Beliefs and Activities

Renunciation of Citizenship

Attempt to establish their beliefs by filing legal documents to renounce their citizenship, return Social Security cards, and cancel birth certificates

Emancipation from Government

Believe in emancipating themselves from the U.S. government by refusing to either pay taxes or use a state driver's license, or obey U.S. laws

Redemption Theory

Believe in the Redemption Theory, which holds that the U.S. government went bankrupt when it replaced the gold standard with paper currency in 1933; this theory also contends that the U.S. government began using citizens as collateral in trade agreements with foreign governments

Fraudulent Activities

May engage in criminal activities related to defrauding banks, credit institutions, and the U.S. government because they consider these organizations to be without merit

Unit 3, Lesson 2

Paper Terrorism



Sovereign citizens are known for clogging the courts by filing hundreds of documents containing unintelligible language, a practice known as **paper terrorism**.

The Florida Statutes prohibit sovereign citizens from filing false documents. If a sovereign citizen perceives they are provoked by a government official, the sovereign citizen may retaliate by filing nuisance property liens and frivolous lawsuits against the official, which would be legally binding until lawfully dismissed.



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Sovereign Citizens Can Be Extremely Violent

Although sovereign citizens tend to fight the government through nuisance legal tactics, they may also become extremely violent. Sovereign citizens can be especially dangerous to you during traffic stops.

❏ **Warning:** Be on guard for drivers who may try to distract you with confusing documents and animated arguments for sovereignty status; it may be an ambush.



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Indicators of Sovereign Citizens

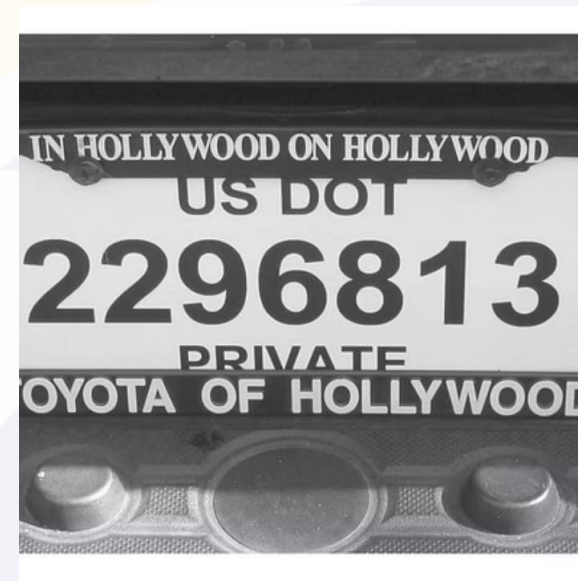
While these may also be useful to identify members of other extremist groups, below are some indicators of potential sovereign citizens:

- Antigovernment bumper stickers on vehicles
- Homemade vehicle registration and license plates on vehicles
- Use of personal seals, stamps, or thumb prints in red ink
- Homemade ID from a non-recognizable territory
- Spelling personal names in all capital letters or first and last name separated by a colon (e.g., JOHN DOE, jane: doe)
- Signatures followed by: "under duress," "Sovereign Living Soul" (SLS), or the copyright symbol (©)
- Excessive reference to the Bible, Constitution of the United States, U.S. Supreme Court decisions, or treaties with foreign governments

 **LE632.4:** Identify how to recognize a sovereign citizen

Unit 3, Lesson 2

Sovereign Citizen License Plates



Examples of homemade license plates used by sovereign citizens. These plates often contain phrases like "private property," "not for hire," or reference to "private mode of travel."

☐ **Officer Safety:** Exercise extreme caution when encountering vehicles with these types of plates during traffic stops.



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Militias

Militias refuse to recognize the authority of municipal, state, and federal governments. Many of today's militias are connected by self-described patriot beliefs.

📋 **LE632.5:** Identify the ideology and characteristics of militias



Unit 3, Lesson 2

Common Militia Beliefs



Second Amendment

The Second Amendment, the right to bear arms, is a cornerstone of the Constitution.



Armed Enforcement

Only well-armed people can enforce their own rights.



Gun Regulation

Any form of gun regulation is a denial of their rights.



Sixteenth Amendment

The Sixteenth Amendment, allowing federal income tax, was authorized through fraud.

Militia View of Law Enforcement

Militias view law enforcement officers as representatives of the government, which they feel is controlled by people who cannot be trusted to preserve law and order.

Therefore, militia members train for preemptive attacks or ambushes by the government and are often arrested for weapons violations.





Unit 3 Summary

Key Takeaways: Criminal Gangs

1

Recognition

Identify gang members through clothing, tattoos, hand signs, colors, and graffiti

2

Documentation

Document all observable identifiers to aid in prosecution and penalty enhancement

3

Officer Safety

Exercise extreme caution - gang members may have advanced training and use silent communication

4

Community Engagement

Build rapport with community members and learn local gang activity patterns





Unit 3 Summary

Key Takeaways: Extremist Groups

1

Sovereign Citizens

Recognize indicators like homemade plates, antigovernment rhetoric, and unusual documentation. Can be extremely dangerous during traffic stops.

2

Militias

Refuse to recognize government authority, often have weapons training, and view law enforcement as representatives of an untrustworthy government.

3

Domestic Terrorism

White supremacist groups and other extremists may commit violent acts to intimidate civilians or influence government policy.

4

First Amendment vs. Violence

Antigovernment speech is protected, but advancing ideology through force or violence is illegal.

