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The
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Group

Introduction to De-Escalation Techniques for Election Workers

Introduction



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Course Outline

1. Introduction
2. Defining De-Escalation
3. Key Principles of De-Escalation
4. De-Escalation Techniques
5. Self-Care and Support
6. Scenario-Based Training
7. Conclusion



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What You Will Learn

- Learn and practice best practices of de-escalation
- Foster a positive and respectful environment
- Navigate future situations with confidence and composure



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Defining De-escalation



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What and Why of De-escalation

What is it?

U.S. Department of Homeland
Security Policy Statement
044-05

*Using communication (both
verbal and non-verbal) to shift
the energy in a tense situation.*

Why is it important?

- Prevention
- Safety



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Common Drivers

- Long wait times
- Confusion about voting procedures
- Disputes over eligibility
- Conflict between voters or observers
- General distrust regarding elections
- Mis/dis-information
- Mutual distrust/worry of hostility from the other person



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Your Role in De-escalation

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

1. Recognize
2. Assess
3. De-escalate
4. Report



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Recognize

- Change in baseline behavior or mood
- Pacing, agitated gestures
- Staring through you
- Blocking others' movements
- Finger pointing
- Distracted or inability to focus



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Assess

- The situation
 - Be aware of any internal biases
- Yourself
 - Are you in the right state to handle the situation?



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De-escalate

- Prevention
- Safety
 - Yourself
 - Others
- Limits
- Help



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Report

Reporting is critical to the prevention of workplace and community violence. Threats that are not known cannot be managed.

- Internal reporting structure
- After-action report



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Key Principles of De-escalation



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Key Principles of De-Escalation

- Empathy
- Active Listening
- Respect
- Attentive Communication



Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

- Listen to understand
- Find common ground
- Find common solutions



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Active Listening

Give the speaker your full attention and try to understand the entire message they are trying to convey. Be mindful of:

- Verbal and non-verbal cues
- Asking open-ended questions
- Summarizing key points
- Acknowledging their feelings and concerns



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Respect

- Remain respectful and courteous. Use “please” and “thank you.”
- Respect personal space.
- Avoid changing the subject or interrupting the other person.



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Attentive Communication

- Demonstrate calmness and composure.
- Give your full attention - nod and ask questions.
- Present genuine concern and willingness to understand.
- Remain politically impartial.
- Maintain a neutral and attentive facial expression.
- Use slow, deliberate movements and a relaxed stance.
- Change the setting, if possible.
- Know your limits and seek additional help



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Learning Check



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De-escalation Techniques



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Verbal Strategies

- **Tone:** Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy
- **Volume:** Be aware of your volume and avoid raising your voice
- **Rate of speech:** Slower can be more soothing
- **Inflection:** Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables that could have a negative effect



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Non-Verbal Strategies

- **Posture:** Keep a relaxed yet alert stance to the side of the person
- **Hand motions:** Keep hands down, open and visible
- **Movements:** Use slow, deliberate movements
- **Facial expressions:** Maintain a neutral, attentive facial expression



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Time and Space Management

- **Personal space:** Maintain a safe distance - avoid touching the person
- **Buddy system:** Avoid being alone with the person
- **Location:** Change the setting, if possible
- **Self-awareness:** Know your limits
- **You're not alone:** Seek additional help when needed



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C.L.A.R.A. Method

Center, Listen, Affirm/Acknowledge, Respond, Assess

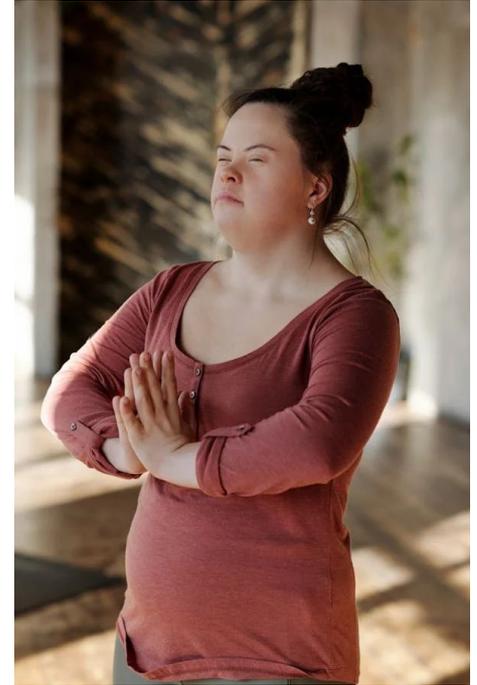


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Center

- Be fully present in the situation
- Be aware of your reactions and
- Bring yourself into a place of understanding and empathy
- Set aside any judgmental thoughts



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Listen

- Actively listen
 - Eyes
 - Body
 - Mind
- Feelings
- Needs not being met
- Universal values or principles



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Acknowledge/Affirm

- Reflect back
- Ask for confirmation



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Respond

- Ask
 - Open-ended questions
 - Summarize key points
 - Acknowledge their feelings and concerns
- Share
 - Your feelings
 - Your needs
- Respond
 - Brainstorm positive, concrete actions
 - Offer ideas that help them reframe



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Assess

- Chain of command
- When to bring in help
- Know you're not alone



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Self Care and Support



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Recognize Stress and Burnout

Stress

- Palpitations
- Dry mouth
- Accelerated speech
- Feelings of overwhelm

Burnout

- Exhaustion
- Decreased motivation
- Lowered performance
- Negative attitudes



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Techniques for Management

- Deep breathing exercises
- Using your senses
- Stretching
- Meditation
- Mindfulness

Building Resilience

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In the challenging world of elections management, resilience, or the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties, is a valuable trait that helps election officials thrive in the face of adversity. Building resilience can improve your ability to adapt and overcome obstacles.

BENEFITS

- Enhances ability to handle stress and pressures
- Improved problem solving skills
- Greater overall well-being

QUICK EXERCISES/ACTIVITIES

Positive Affirmations

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on your strengths and past successes.
2. Write down positive affirmations about your abilities and your capacity to overcome challenges.
3. Place these affirmations in common areas to you, such as on a mirror, computer screen, or in a desk drawer you frequently open.
4. Repeat these affirmations to yourself regularly, especially during difficult moments.

Gratitude Journaling

1. Set aside a few minutes each day (or whenever possible) to reflect on and write down the things you're grateful for.
2. Focus on the positive aspects of your work and life, no matter how small they may seem.
3. Keep a dedicated journal for your gratitude entries.

BUILDING RESILIENCE THE ELECTIONS GROUP

The Importance of Social Connection

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Fostering social connections is vital for any healthy work environment, but especially for election offices. Prioritizing moments of social connection can have a positive impact on your well-being and team cohesion.

BENEFITS

- Enhanced teamwork and collaboration
- Reduced feelings of isolation and stress
- Improved overall job satisfaction

QUICK EXERCISE/ACTIVITY

Two-Minute Icebreaker

1. Start a team meeting with a quick icebreaker activity. This can be a fun question, a virtual game or a simple check-in. Some examples are [listed here](#).
2. Encourage team members to share a brief update or personal highlight.
3. Keep it lighthearted, but office appropriate, and inclusive to create a positive and connected atmosphere.

Lunchtime Social Break

1. Dedicate one lunch break per week, or as able, to a virtual or in-person social gathering with colleagues.
2. Use this time to discuss non-work-related topics, shared hobbies or engage in a casual game, such as a board or card game.
3. Foster a sense of camaraderie and connection outside of formal work discussions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONNECTION THE ELECTIONS GROUP



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Create a Trusted Support System



Friends



Family



Colleagues



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Scenario-Based Training



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Scenario 1

Scenario 1: Provisional Ballot

Characters

- Election Worker (EW)
- Voter (V)
- Supervisor (S)

Setting

- Polling place check-in area



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Scenario 1: Provisional Ballot

Script

EW: Good morning! May I have your name, please?

V: Sure, it's John Doe.

EW: Thank you, John. It looks like you're not on the voter roll for this precinct. Are you sure this is your correct polling place?

V: Yes, I've been voting here for years! There must be some mistake.

EW: I understand. Sometimes errors do occur. We can issue you a provisional ballot so your vote can still be counted once your eligibility is confirmed.

V: (frustrated) A provisional ballot? Why can't I just vote like everyone else?

EW: I'm really sorry for the inconvenience, John. I assure you, this process is in place to ensure everyone's vote counts.

V: (raising voice) This is unfair! I feel like my vote isn't going to count if it's provisional!

EW: (calmly) I understand your frustration. Let me call my supervisor to explain the process in more detail.

(EW signals to Supervisor to come over.)

S: Hi, I'm the supervisor. How can I help?

V: (*Angrily*) I'm being told I have to use a provisional ballot, but I've always voted here! This makes no sense!

[Decision Point]



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Scenario 2

Scenario 2: Long Lines

Characters:

- Election Worker (EW)
- Voter 1 (V1)
- Voter 2 (V2)
- Crowd of Voters (C)

Setting

- Polling place with a long line of waiting voters.



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Scenario 2: Long Lines

Script

V1: (to EW) This line is taking forever! I've been here for 30 minutes!

EW: I'm really sorry for the wait. We're doing everything we can to get everyone through as quickly as possible.

V2: (joining in) I have to get back to work. What's the holdup?

EW: I understand how frustrating this is. We're working to ensure everyone can vote, and we appreciate your patience.

V1: (angry) This is unacceptable! Can't you open more stations or something?

C: (murmurs of agreement and frustration from the crowd)

[Decision Point]



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Scenario 3

Scenario 3: Distrust of Vote Being Counted

Characters

- Election Worker (EW)
- Voter (V)

Setting

- Polling place after a voter has cast their ballot.



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Scenario 3: Distrust of Vote Being Counted

Script

V: (approaching EW after voting) How can I be sure my vote will be counted?

EW: Your vote will definitely be counted. Our processes are designed to ensure every vote is secure and included in the final tally.

V: (skeptical) But how do I know for sure? I've heard so many stories about votes being lost or tampered with.

EW: I understand your concerns. We have multiple safeguards in place to protect your vote. Each step of the process is monitored and verified.

V: (agitated) That's what they always say, but I don't trust the system. What proof do I have?

EW: Your ballot has been securely processed. Here is a handout that explains our processes.

V: (raising voice) I don't want explanations, I want guarantees! This is my vote we're talking about!

[Decision Point]



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Conclusion



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What We Learned

- Learned and practiced best practices of de-escalation
- Identified how to foster a positive and respectful environment
- Instilled greater confidence navigating future situations with confidence and composure



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Additional Resources

- [Observer Relations Training](#)
- [De-Escalation Resources](#)
- [De-Escalation Posters](#)
- [CISA De-Escalation Series](#)
- [De-Escalation for Poll Workers](#)
- [Wellness and Resilience In-A-Box](#)
- [BDI Directory](#)



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Additional Resources

- Veterans Hotline- 1-877-424-3838
- Trevor Project Suicide/Crisis Hotline - 1-866-488-7376
- SAMHSA - 1-800-662-HELP



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