



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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Use of Force Policies at the FCSO Meet or Exceed "Eight Can't Wait" Initiative

The current national discussion on use of force policies by American law enforcement focuses on mandating several specific proposed reforms which include banning chokeholds, requiring de-escalation training and practices, and expecting officers to intervene to stop excessive force by other officers.

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) has already implemented all of these policies and practices well before this national discussion.

The FCSO Response to Resistance and De-escalation Techniques policy already meets the eight policy requirements being discussed nationally for all law enforcement agencies to now adopt.

1. **Chokeholds:** Chokeholds are forbidden and are not taught in this agency. Neck restraints are also prohibited.
2. **De-escalation:** De-escalation is taught to all deputies and the minimum use of force in order to achieve compliance is also taught.
3. **Warning before shooting:** In all possible circumstances, a verbal warning must be given prior to utilizing deadly force.
4. **Exhaust all alternatives before shooting:** All efforts are made to peacefully resolve a situation using minimal force depending on each situation.
5. **Duty to intervene:** Every deputy must intervene if they observe another deputy using excessive force. Civilian employees are also required to report excessive force to their chain of command immediately.
6. **Ban shooting at moving vehicles:** This is not permitted unless it is absolutely necessary to protect against imminent danger.
7. **Use of force continuum:** This is in place as a training guide to determine reasonable force.
8. **Comprehensive reporting:** FCSO requires comprehensive written reports of incidents where force is used.

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Use of force events have dropped by 46% from 28 incidents in 2016 under the former Sheriff to 15 cases in 2019 while at the same time arrests have increased by 38%. Use of force is defined as having to physically take someone to the ground, use of a Dart Firing Stun Gun (Taser), aerosol spray, impact weapon, non-lethal weapons, less-lethal weapons such as impact munitions up-to deadly force.

Based on the number of arrests per year, FCSO's statistics show that an arrestee has a 0.04% chance of having force used by an FCSO deputy during an arrest. The last time deadly force was used in Flagler County was December 2012. It is estimated that deputies would have been legally justified to use lethal force 12-15 times since Sheriff Staly took office, but deputies have not chosen to do so a single time and were able to de-escalate each situation successfully.

"These are not new policy changes for us. We have taught these basics for years now," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "As a four-diamond accredited agency we have implemented and train our deputies using the best model policies and practices recommended by national and state organizations. I also support the creation of a nationwide database to stop rogue officers going from department to department."

The internal training program involves a nine-week New Hire Academy followed by a multi-week Field Training Program for new deputies. This is in addition to the required minimum of 770 hours of state academy training. For all deputies, there are annual mandatory training courses covering a wide range of important operational and policy topics, required leadership courses for those in supervisory roles, mentoring, and special training opportunities. Deputies are issued body-worn cameras and cameras are being added to FCSO patrol cars to supplement the body-worn cameras.

In 2017, Sheriff Staly implemented Guardianship and District policing. Guardianship policing is the community and neighborhoods working together with the Sheriff's Office and each taking ownership in the community's safety together. Deputies and citizens report this service delivery model has resulted in positive relationships with the community and significant crime reduction. These relationships also help to build transparency and trust.

The high degree of professionalism at the FCSO is the result of recruitment, hiring, training, supervision, model policies, leadership development programs, support for college education, statewide accreditations where Sheriff Staly serves as a Commissioner on the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, and the use of nationally validated best police practices. FCSO is a talented, caring, and culturally competent law enforcement organization continually striving to foster strong and positive relationships with local citizens.

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