



Subject: Critical Decision-making Model	No. Pages: 05	Effective Date: 09/01/2017
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301.00 Critical Decision-making Model

301.01 Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to provide guidelines for all North Richland Hills Police Department employees in the use of the Critical Decision-making Model and its application in reaching objectively reasonable and appropriate decisions in all facets of administrative and operational activities.

301.02 Policy

- A. It is the policy of the North Richland Hills Police Department that its employees, while performing administrative or operational activities, will utilize the Critical Decision-making Model (CDM) to guide themselves towards objectively reasonable and appropriate decisions.
- B. As befits the situation, employees may navigate the CDM deliberately or with great speed, meaning employees may move to any step as needed should the situation change or circumstances require immediate action.
- C. A central core of policing is the employment of discretion or values based decision-making. The CDM will be utilized as a guide in all values-based decisions, particularly those which entail critical activities such as the use of force, police pursuits or other decision points that hold potential to significantly impact the Department or community.

301.03 Critical Decision-making Model Core

- A. The North Richland Hills Police Department Critical Decision-making Model (CDM) is a five-step critical thinking process.
- B. At the center of the CDM is an ethical core that provides grounding and guidance for the entire process. The six elements of the CDM core mirror our Department’s guiding principles, which are Service, Honor, Integrity, Ethics, the Sanctity of all Human Life, and De-escalation (SHIELD). Each step of the decision-making process must be balanced against these principles:
 - 1. Service
 - a. Our fundamental duty is to serve the community; it is the sole reason we are empowered with authority to act and the only product we have to provide. Serving the community means respecting the dignity of every person and meeting the needs of others with courtesy and compassion.
 - b. We recognize that service to the community does not displace the enforcement of laws. As outlined in the North Richland Hills Police Department Approaches, the vigorous pursuit of criminals is an integral component of serving the community. Enforcement action shall prioritize the safety of the community and be administered in balance with the faith and confidence of our public.
 - c. Employees shall consider their actions and strive to pursue only those actions which advance our mission of service.

2. Honor
 - a. As members of law enforcement, we hold a place in one of the most honored callings known. Our service is a privilege that is only made possible by our continued adherence to the principles that give cause for our community to honor us. It is honor which binds us to this public faith and honor which empowers us to always act in a manner befitting such trust.
 - b. Employees shall be ever mindful of the public trust and pursue only those actions which are honorable.
3. Integrity
 - a. Integrity represents our commitment and willingness to live by these standards in all aspects of our life. In this way, integrity exists as the foundation of law enforcement. It is not enough to profess these values; each one of us must bind them to our heart and live a life that is whole and undivided, thereby supporting an organization that is unified in service and strength.
 - b. Employees will continually evaluate the integrity of their actions in both public and private and pursue only those means and ends which are consistent with our stated values.
4. Ethics
 - a. The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, included within these General Orders, is an obligation of all employees of this Department.
 - b. While specific passages pertain to the duties of a peace officer, the ethical commitments contained within this oath are universal to all within the profession of Law Enforcement.
 - c. Employees shall be familiar with these obligations and weigh their actions against the standards the Code establishes.
5. Sanctity of all Human Life
 - a. The primary function of policing is the preservation of human life and the prevention of harm; all other facets of this profession fall subservient to this objective.
 - b. The safety, dignity and liberty of all persons will be considered in all decisions.
 - c. Employees shall always consider methods that are less injurious or reduce risk to any person while still accomplishing a necessary and lawful objective.
6. De-escalation

Police work often involves moments of high stress and emotion which may cloud perspective and reduce the time and range of options immediately available. De-escalation seeks to stabilize situations and thereby reclaim the ability to recruit additional resources and explore alternative responses that may increase the opportunity for universally successful outcomes.

 - a. The immediacy, necessity and proportionality of action shall be considered in all decisions.
 - b. De-escalation shall be considered in any situation where such tactics may empower an employee to accomplish a necessary and lawful objective through means that pose less risk to any person.

301.04 Critical Decision-making Model Process

- A. Collect Information
 1. Generally, the first step in the process is to identify the situation and gather information and intelligence.

2. For an officer enroute to a call, this process should begin as one is making their way to the scene by querying their own experience and collecting information from all available sources, including Communications.
3. Key questions that employees should ask themselves:
 - a. What is happening or has happened?
 - b. What do I know so far about this incident?
 - c. What else do I need to know?
 - d. What do my training and experience tell me about this type of incident?

B. Assess Situation, Threats and Risks

1. The second step in the process should begin as an employee is responding to an incident and evaluating the information they are receiving.
2. Key questions that employees should ask themselves:
 - a. Do I need to take action immediately?
 - i. Nothing in the CDM restricts an employee from taking immediate action if that is what is necessary.
 - ii. The CDM can be navigated as quickly or deliberately as the circumstances dictate.
 - iii. If immediate action is not required, an employee can move through the CDM at a more deliberate pace.
 - b. What is the threat/risk, if any?
 - c. What do I know so far?
 - d. Do I need to seek more information?
 - e. What could go wrong and how serious would the harm be?
 - f. Does this situation require a supervisory response to provide additional planning and coordination?
 - g. Do I need additional police resources?
 - h. Is this a situation for the police to handle alone or should other agencies and resources be involved?
3. Employees should then determine a working strategy to mitigate risks and maximize opportunities and benefits.

C. Consider Police Authority and Department Policy

1. Step 3 requires an employee to conduct an important self-check of one's authority to take action. Employees must consider their legal authority to act as well as what Department policies say about the situation.
2. Key questions that employees should ask themselves:
 - a. What legal authority do I have to take action?
 - b. What Department policies guide or control my response?
 - c. What other issues should I think about? (e.g., jurisdictional or mutual aid considerations)

D. Identify Options and Determine the Best Course of Action

1. Using the information and assessment from previous steps, employees may now begin to narrow their options and determine the best course of action. A key component of this step is determining if one has enough information and resources and a compelling interest to act right away.
2. Key questions that employees should ask themselves:
 - a. What, specifically, is it I am trying to achieve?
 - b. What options are available to me?
 - c. What contingencies must I consider if I choose a particular option?

- d. How might the situation change (or a subject respond) if I choose a particular option?
- e. Is there a compelling reason to act now or can I wait?
- f. Do I have the information and resources I need to act now?
- 3. Then, employees should select the best course of action, keeping in mind:
 - a. The immediacy of any threat;
 - b. The greatest likelihood of success and the least potential for harm;
 - c. How proportional the response will be, given the risks/threats and the totality of the circumstances;
 - d. The safety of the public, employees, and the sanctity of all human life.
- 4. The acronym PLANE is useful in navigating Step 4:
 - a. Is my response **P**roportional?
 - b. Is my response **L**awful?
 - c. Is my response **A**uthorized?
 - d. Is my response **N**ecessary?
 - e. Is my response **E**thical?

E. Act, Review and Reassess

- 1. In Step 5, employees execute the plan, evaluate the impact, and determine what else, if anything, they need to do.
- 2. Employees should execute the plan and then ask themselves:
 - a. Did I achieve the desired outcome?
 - b. Is there anything more I need to consider?
 - c. What lessons did I learn?
- 3. If the incident is not resolved, employees should go through the CDM again as required.
- 4. If the incident is resolved, employees should review their decisions using the CDM model as a guide. If documentation is required, the CDM will provide a useful framework for articulating one's actions and decisions.

*Continued with **301.05** on the following page*

301.05 Critical Decision-making Model Illustration

