Unit Goal
To provide officers with crisis intervention and communication techniques specific to law enforcement for gaining compliance with youth in crisis and using de-escalation skills tailored to youth.

Scope
Officers will learn how to establish rapport and avoid roadblocks while communicating with youth who are in crisis.

Performance Objectives
At the conclusion of the unit, officers will be able to:

4-1 Differentiate various methods of gaining compliance during a crisis event with youth.

4-2 Understand elements of effective communication during a crisis, including establishing contact, building rapport, calming techniques, reflective statements, and active listening skills.

Materials
- Demonstration of De-escalation Techniques
  - Script for role play or Video 4.1: Scenario (clip length: 9:07)
- OPTIONAL AS TIME ALLOWS: Case Studies
Unit Outline

I. Objectives
II. Define Crisis and Crisis Intervention
III. Triggers for Adolescents
IV. Crisis State
V. General Communication Guidelines
   a. Initial Approach
   b. Introduction
   c. Dialogue
   d. Connection
   e. Active Listening
   f. Reflecting
   g. Calming
VI. Family
VII. Additional Guidelines
VIII. Behavioral Change Stairway
IX. Responding to Specific Situations/Emotions
   a. Frustrated & Emotionally Distraught
   b. Hostile/Aggressive Behavior
   c. Substance-Induced Behavior
   d. Suicidal Thoughts and/or Behavior
X. Mental Health Response Versus Criminal Arrest
XI. Demonstration of De-Escalation Techniques
### Slide 4-1
**Crisis Intervention & De-escalation**

The instruction presented here is not the sole appropriate response in situations where the suspect is mentally disturbed or responding emotionally. Rather, it is a viable option for the officer who, after assessing the situation, has decided that the preferred course of action in this circumstance is to attempt to get the youth to voluntarily comply with instructions, commands, or requests.

Physical restraint techniques or defensive tactics are not addressed in this course; officers have already been trained on them. The assumption is that if the situation warrants it, such techniques and tactics will be employed for the safety of the officers and others.

Sharing the following will help some officers "buy in" to this section: "The number one job for officers is to provide for public safety by remaining safe and returning home safely. What we are going to cover in this section will increase the chance of everyone remaining safe: officer, individual, family, and others in the community."

### Slide 4-2
**Objectives**
- Differentiate methods of gaining compliance
- Review elements of effective communication
  - Establishing contact
  - Building rapport
  - Calming techniques
  - Reflective statements
  - Active listening skills

Review the focus of this module: various verbal de-escalation techniques to employ with youth in crisis.

### Slide 4-3
**Crisis**
A crisis can be defined as "any situation in which a youth's ability to cope is exceeded," such as: Although sometimes defined as "any situation in which a youth’s ability to cope is exceeded," the word crisis typically brings to mind high-risk situations.
Training Aids

- Barricaded subjects
- Domestic, peer, or partner violence
- Substance abuse
- High-risk for suicide
- Mental illness

A more accurate definition of crisis is “any situation in which a youth's perceived ability to cope is exceeded.”

Slide 4-4

Crisis Intervention

Short-term, time-limited intervention designed to re-establish a youth's equilibrium and to solve an immediate problem

Slide 4-5

Triggers for Adolescents

- Parents’ divorce or separation
- Break-up of a relationship
- Suspension or expulsion from school
- Sickness, injury, or death
- Personal or school-related difficulties
- Victim of bullying
  - Social media posts (e.g., Facebook)
- Getting caught in illegal activity
- Deterioration of mental health

A precipitating event has usually occurred within the last 24-48 hours, and normal coping mechanisms have failed to resolve the situation.

Note that although “deterioration of mental health” is listed as a trigger, all of these triggers can result in deterioration of mental health.

Slide 4-6

Crisis State

- Emotions, not reason, rule.
- Non-verbal communication dominates.

In crisis or in response to a stressful situation, individuals behave on an intense emotional level, rather than a rational/thinking level. Emotions, not reason, are controlling the individual's actions. The situation is perceived to be a threat to the emotional, psychological, and physical needs of the individual.

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

While it is true that the high-risk situations listed here are likely crisis events, there are many more crisis events that are not necessarily “high-risk” or “high profile.”

A more accurate definition of crisis is “any situation in which a youth’s perceived ability to cope is exceeded.”

In other words, if you think you are in crisis, you are.

Explain what is meant by equilibrium: returning to a normal state of functioning.
Training Aids

Slide 4-7

**Communication with Youth – General Guidelines**

- Use simple, direct, age-appropriate language.
- Address youth at eye level.
- Explain your role: you are there to help.
- Be honest. Don’t make promises you can’t keep.
- Remove upsetting influences from the scene.

Slide 4-8

**Initial Approach**

- If practical, monitor youth’s behavior prior to approaching him/her.
- Assume a calm, non-threatening manner.
- Consider personal space issues.

Slide 4-9

**Introduction**

“I’m _______, an officer with the _______ Police Department. I would like to help you with your situation.”

“My name is _______. I’m with the _______ Police Department. I’d like to talk to you about what has happened today. I understand there is a problem and I’d like to help.”

Slide 4-10

**Establishing a Dialogue**

To facilitate dialogue:

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

These general guidelines apply to communicating with any youth.

Use language that takes the youth’s age into consideration. Ask officers how communicating with a 7-year-old child differs from talking to a 17-year-old teen. Younger children may be afraid of being taken away and locked up.

Officers should not necessarily assume that they are a welcome presence. Some families are suspicious of law enforcement, and the youth may have had previous interactions with police that have gone poorly.

Obviously, it is only possible to monitor behavior prior to approach if the youth is not engaging in high-risk behaviors. If possible, a moment should be spent observing and gathering impressions.

An initial calm manner sets the tone for the interaction.

Depending on the state of the youth, he/she might need additional personal space, at least initially.

As mentioned a moment ago, officers should not assume that youth know they are there to help.

A clear introduction is important. The slide presents two examples of doing this.

Opening statements can establish the tone for the whole interaction, so officers should try to set the stage for productive communication. If the youth appears to be willing to communicate, an open-ended inquiry can help elicit more
Training Aids

- Use open-ended and closed-ended probes.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Use personalized statements.

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

information. If, on the other hand, the youth appears “shut-down,” initial close-ended (Yes/No) questions may be more effective.

Setting the stage for productive communication and a good exchange is especially challenging if a youth is engaging in high-risk behavior since the initial tone in such situations needs to be directive, with specific instructions about what needs to occur in order to stabilize the situation.

Prompt officers’ recollection of previous interrogation training courses that addressed how open-ended questions allow for the other person to do more of the talking. As youth talk, officers are gathering more information upon which to base decisions and form next steps.

Ask for an example of an open-ended probe (“Tell me what happened here”).

Clarifying statements can help build rapport because they use “I” statements to initiate dialogue:
- “I don’t understand.”
- “I can’t figure out why.”

Sympathy is about one’s own feelings, which during an interaction with youth in crisis, are less important than the youth’s feelings.

Empathy involves identifying another person’s feelings and communicating that understanding back to him or her. It builds rapport and trust.

By letting the youth know which emotion you think you hear, you are expressing empathy.
- “This situation seems to have really made you mad.”
- “It sounds like this is very frustrating to you.”
- “You seem to be confused about what to do.”

Making a Connection

- EMPATHY versus SYMPATHY
- Empathy = communicating your understanding of someone’s feelings to him/her
By expressing empathy, an officer may increase his/her rapport (and make a better connection) with the youth.

**Note to Instructor:** If likely to be relevant to officers participating in the training, broach the topic of how to establish and maintain empathy when there is an ethnic/linguistic/cultural difference between the officer and the youth/family in crisis. For example, if the officer is white and the youth/family are of color, or the officer is Asian and the youth/family are Hispanic, how might the officer respond if the youth/family interject a comment or observation about the differences between the officer and the youth/family? An officer may increase the likelihood of establishing or maintaining empathy by:

- Acknowledging the ethnic/linguistic/cultural difference commented upon by the youth or family member (“Yes, I appreciate that I am __________ and you are __________.”)

- Stating openness to information (“If there is something about that you think I need to know, please tell me now.”)

- Stating intent to resolve the crisis situation (“But, what is most important is that we resolve this situation without anybody getting hurt. That is my goal and our responsibility and that’s what we need to do together here today.”)

Being a good, active listener takes both concentration and practice.

During a crisis, it is especially easy to hear without listening because you may be distracted by so many other factors. The irony is that during a crisis is when it is more critical for you to listen closely with engagement, compassion, and understanding.
Training Aids

- Listening is often the key to a successful intervention.

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

*Helping youth put words to feelings instead of putting feelings into action is the core feature of a successful intervention.* Like any of us, youth will not talk if they fail to sense that someone is listening. As discussed, active listening can be conveyed both verbally and nonverbally. Active listening is a true skill. Practicing and further developing this skill can help officers become familiar with the youth with whom they work and can be a powerful tool for them to rely on during times of crisis.

### Slide 4-13

**Active Listening Skills**

- Reflecting – Labeling the emotion or identifying the feeling
  - “You sound…”
  - “You seem… “
  - “I hear…”
- Mirroring: Repeating the last few of the youth’s words to capture the gist of his/her feelings
- Paraphrasing – Putting meaning of other’s statements into your own words

### Slide 4-14

**More Active Listening Skills**

- Insert pauses (silence) immediately before or after saying something meaningful.
- Use minimal encouragers.
- Use “I” messages.
- Ask open-ended questions.

When a listener is able to reflect the speaker’s feelings, the listener is perceived as being empathetic and understanding.

Provide examples of mirroring:

- “The worst day of your life…?”
- “You just feel like smashing something?”
- “You never want to see her again?”

Provide an example of paraphrasing in the context of understanding the youth’s story:

- “Let me just make sure I understand what you’re saying; it seems [summary of situation in your own words]…”

Review additional active listening skills listed on slide.

Provide an explanation of *minimal encouragers*, which are small signals indicating that you are listening and understanding:

- words like *uh-huh, yes, no, hmmm*
- physical actions, such as nodding or looking expectantly at the speaker

Provide examples of “I” messages. Use “I believe,” rather than “I know,” to avoid a retort of, “You don’t know me, you just met me.”

- “Jim, when you say you are going to kill yourself, I get concerned because I believe that’s not the only way you can handle this.”
Training Aids

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

- “Sarah, when you say that you will think about what we have been talking about, I feel relieved because I believe you are a strong person.”

Provide examples of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions provide an opportunity for a narrative response, rather than a one-word answer. The typical question, “What’s going on here?” can often elicit the response: “Nothing!”

Remind officers that their tone of voice is equally important as the actual words.
- “Sarah, what led up to this?”
- “Jim, how did this all start?”
- “Sam, what happened at your mother’s house last night?”

Review the barriers listed on the slide. Avoid arguing or creating a conflict.
- Example to avoid: “You just don’t know the facts here.”
- Alternatives: “I am not clear on what led up to this” or “Can you help me understand what led up to this situation?”

Avoid criticizing or making the youth feel worse.
- Example to avoid: “If you didn’t have such a big mouth, this sort of thing wouldn’t happen.”

Avoid jumping to conclusions. Don’t tell the youth what you think the problem is.
- Examples to avoid: “You know, I think you are depressed” and “You know, I think you are making too big a deal about this.”

Avoid pacifying. Don’t belittle the situation.
- Example to avoid: “You know things aren’t really all that bad.”

Avoid derailing. Don’t change the subject too abruptly, unless there is a clear reason to distract the youth.

Slide 4-15

**Barriers to Active Listening**

- Arguing
- Criticizing
- Jumping to conclusions
- Pacifying
- Derailing
- Moralizing
- Name Calling
- Ordering
Training Aids

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

- Example to avoid: “Gee, that's too bad. By the way, weren't we just out here last week?”
  Avoid moralizing or using moral obligations to manipulate the person.
- Examples to avoid: “It is your duty as a young adult to…” and “It is your responsibility as a young person to…”
  Avoid name calling and “labeling” the person or the behavior.
- Example to avoid: “Someone would have to be crazy to think of doing that.”
  Avoid ordering. Using an authoritative approach early on may create more resistance.
- Example to avoid: “Just do what I am telling you…”

Remind officers to avoid the temptation of trying to quickly cheer up youth who are upset. Officers will be much more effective if they use active listening skills and demonstrate to the youth that they understand what the youth is going through and/or are feeling.

Paraphrasing – a response in which the officer conveys in his or her own words the essence of a teen’s message. This demonstrates that the officer has been listening. This is helpful when an officer may feel the need to respond, but is not quite sure what to say.

Teen: My dad hates me and never listens to anything I say. I know he would have been happier if I had just killed myself tonight. (Quiet voice, head down, crying)

Officer: You think that your dad doesn’t hear you and doesn’t want you around anymore?”

Reflecting feelings – a response in which the officer mirrors back to the teen the emotions he/she is communicating. This sort of empathic response is helpful in building rapport. The youth

Slide 4-16

Reflecting
Responding to statements made by the youth to encourage him or her to continue talking, such as:

- “I see…”
- “Tell me about it…”
- “That would be one option. What other options do you have?”
- “Uh huh, okay…”
### Training Aids

#### Calming/Soothing Techniques

- Be empathic.
- Use modeling.
  - Attempt to calm youth by displaying own calmness.
  - Speak slowly and evenly.
- Provide actual techniques for calming down.
- Avoid saying “relax” or “calm down.”

### Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

will feel that the officer understands where he/she is coming from.

Officer: *You are feeling sad because you think your dad would have been happier if you were dead.*

*Summative reflections* – a response in which the officer summarizes the main facts and feelings that the youth has expressed over a relatively long period.

The summation is used to confirm information and to solidify the relationship. It reminds the youth of how far negotiations have come and how much more under control things are now than they were at first. It clarifies issues in a concise way that serves to focus officer and youth on the relevant issues.

Officer (after a long interaction): *“Mary, when I first arrived here tonight, you were pretty convinced that killing yourself was your best option. After talking with you, it seems that you now understand that you have some other options, that maybe it will take some time for you and your Dad to figure this all out, but that there is hope that you can.”*

Providing specific techniques to help individuals calm down can be helpful. HOWEVER, officers should attempt to connect with the youth by being empathic first.

Here are soothing techniques that officers can suggest to youth to calm themselves:

- “Take a breath.”
- “Try to sit for a moment.”
- “Try to stop moving for a moment and catch your breath.”
- “See if you can put your hands in your lap and stop speaking just for a moment.”

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Slide 4-17

### Calming/Soothing Techniques

- Be empathic.
- Use modeling.
  - Attempt to calm youth by displaying own calmness.
  - Speak slowly and evenly.
- Provide actual techniques for calming down.
- Avoid saying “relax” or “calm down.”
“I want to see if you can make your voice as quiet as mine is right now. Let’s try it and find out.”

Remind officers that telling someone in an agitated state to “relax” or “calm down” can escalate the situation. Asking someone to “slow down” can be helpful.

Remind officers that youth often vent for long periods because they are convinced that adults are not listening and won’t hear unless the same thing is repeated several times. Paraphrasing, reflecting, and summarizing will be helpful. Watching for signs as to the helpfulness of the “venting/unloading” is critical. Signs to watch for include:

- youth seems to be listening more to the officer
- youth’s body is slowing down (limbs are moving less, breathing is slowing)
- youth is able to maintain eye contact without being threatening

Remind officers that they have two ears and only one mouth – and thus, they should listen at least twice as much as they talk.

An officer can make a difference in a youth’s life simply by listening without judgment and accepting/reflecting the youth’s experience without inserting the officer’s own opinion.

**Officers should avoid repeating what youth has undoubtedly already experienced: an adult quickly telling them what to do.** Even if the course of action is obvious to the officer, youth will reject it if they feel they have not been heard first.

Youth in crisis (especially younger ones) often don’t know the answer to “why?” questions. Asking WHAT or HOW questions will be more helpful.
### Slide 4-20

**Obtaining Information from Family Members**

Use parent interview to determine:
- History/severity of problem
- History of mental health care
- Parental interventions
- Medical problems
- Medications
- Available supports/resources
- Parent’s ability to keep child safe

Inform officers that it is not always possible to get all of the information listed on the slide, but obviously, the more information, the more readily officers can intervene safely and effectively.

Parents are not always the best informants in the midst of a crisis. Checking with other family members can really help. (Sometimes the quietest family member, the “observer,” in the family is the best informant).

When asking about previous mental health treatment, ask the parents the name of the youth’s counselor and agency, why treatment started, why it stopped, duration, whether they accompanied the child, etc.

With repeated family contacts, officers can provide resources to family members, expressing hope that they will get help and sharing that the officers will check on how the counseling is going. This holds parents accountable and shifts the onus from officer to parents; parents become empowered and the officer shifts out of “rescuer” role.

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### Slide 4-21

**Other Considerations in Working with Family Members**

- Treat parents as part of the solution. Working together will increase compliance.
- Be observant of families’ strengths and challenges. Strategize interventions with this in mind.
- Be aware that family may have increased expectations of law enforcement and law enforcement interventions.

Parents need to be viewed as partners.

Officers will want to observe different family interactions (but not necessarily comment on them in the moment).

It is helpful to ask parents what they hope the outcome of officers being there will be. At times, this will provide officers an opportunity to clarify their role, what might be possible, etc.

For example, a distraught mother might comment out of exasperation that she wants the officer to put the youth in jail to “teach him a lesson” – even though no crime has been committed. In such situations, officers will want to be empathic with the parent, but explain that is not an option.
### Training Aids

#### Slide 4-22

**Additional Guidelines for De-escalation**
- Keep safety first.
- Be truthful.
  - Don’t feed into delusions.
- Negotiate/provide choices when possible.
  - Help both sides get needs met.
- Increase sense of control and safety.
- Be open to a modified version of choices.
  - “I can’t do that; here is another option.”

#### Slide 4-23

**Behavioral Change Stairway**

#### Slide 4-24

**Slow Down**

### Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

Remind officers that there is a high likelihood that either they or their colleagues will see the youth again. How this interaction proceeds will influence the next one. Thus, being truthful (not making promises that officers can’t keep) is important since the youth will remember.

Ask officers for examples of what being truthful means. For example, instead of reinforcing or “feeding into” delusions (“Yes, I do think that someone is bugging your room”), it is more appropriate to reflect on feelings or otherwise be empathic (“I’m sure that feels like a real intrusion into your privacy.”)

Providing limited, appropriate choices when possible helps the youth have some sense of control. (“I need you to move from there. You can go over there by the table or over there…”)

Active listening is the starting point to changing behavior.

Officers who have been trained in crisis negotiation may recognize the “Behavioral Change Stairway” as it was developed by the FBI’s Crisis Negotiation Unit and is often used in teaching crisis negotiation.

Because of the active listening skills used, including empathy, rapport develops. This leads the youth to begin to trust the officer who is intervening. At that point, the officer begins to have some influence over the youth that can lead to behavior change.

Remind officers it can take some time to “climb the stairs.”

Remember that one of the hallmarks of a CIT program is that officers “slow down” and are able to spend more time on calls when warranted. Trying to rush through an intervention with a youth will likely escalate the situation, taking longer to resolve.
Next we will look at examples of specific emotional states, their associated behaviors, and recommended strategies for dealing with them.

“Frustrated and emotionally distraught” describes an unstable state. Emotions – and therefore behaviors and verbalizations – can be quite variable within a short amount of time. Typical emotions can vary from depression to anger to anxiety.

Ask officers if they have any immediate thoughts about how to approach a youth in this state.

Ask officers how or if the approach might be different if it were a white officer responding to an African-American family or an African-American officer responding to a white family.

A brief discussion may be warranted, depending on the officers’ responses.

Engage the officers in reviewing the approach outlined in the context of the example. For example, how would they acknowledge the person’s frustration? What might be an empathic statement to the girl?
### Slide 4-28

**Hostile/Aggressive Behavior**

- 15-year-old male
- Shoved mother against wall; after father intervened, teen-ager went to his room and broke household items.
- Swearing at parents, saying, “I’ll do what I want with my life.”
- Began when he came home at 1:00 a.m. and parents asked, “Where have you been?”
- Parents also confronted him about money missing from their room. They report son’s recent pattern of staying out late and associating with youth they don’t know.

### Slide 4-29

**Hostile/Aggressive Behavior: Approach**

- Isolate.
- Listen.
- Be empathic (reflect feelings).

### Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

The scenario on the slide fits the general scenario of hostile/aggressive behavior, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, and vandalism.

Engage officers in discussion about an approach to this situation.

Points to highlight during the discussion include:

- As always, safety is paramount. It is the first consideration, so only a minimal amount of physical aggression can be tolerated prior to intervention. However, verbal aggression can be defused.
- It’s important for officers to remain calm. A youth’s ability to remain calm is largely determined by the level of calm shown by adults in charge. We often assume that being loud and aggressive sends a message of authority. Aggressive youth will often escalate to the level of intensity you display, if for no other reason than to “save face.” They often expect you to escalate, and when you do not, they need to watch and listen for what will happen next. This gives everyone a moment to catch their breath, so that safe interventions can follow.
- Do not expect to engage youth in problem-solving until they have their own bodies under control.

Ask officers how or if the approach might be different if it were a white officer responding to an Hispanic youth.

Review the suggested approach outlined on the slide in the context of the class discussion. Is it consistent with what the group discussed? If not, is there a good rationale for any variation?
### Training Aids

- If youth is unresponsive, set limits and provide alternatives.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact.
- State directives firmly.
- Be ready to be friendly if behavior changes.
- Use diversions.

### Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

- Isolate: Do not allow the other person to grandstand in front of others. Either bring them aside, if possible, or remove audience.
- Listen/be empathic. (“I certainly hear how angry you are about that.”) Remind officers that it may take some time for the empathic approach to have an impact.
- Set limits/provide alternatives.
- State directives firmly.
- Use diversions, asking the person to sit down or inquiring about the surroundings – anything that might break the tone.

### Slide 4-30

**Substance-Induced Behavior**

May have rapidly cycling emotions or maintain either an agitated or despondent state

**Approach**

- Be cautious.
- There is potential for impulsive acts and violence.
- Set firm limits.
- Listen, be empathic, and offer alternatives.

**Substance abuse-induced behavior**

- Can look like the "frustrated and emotionally distraught" and/or the “hostile/aggressive” youth.
- Substance abuse can lead to more impulsive and potentially dangerous acts.
- Firm limits and/or structure need to be imposed.

### Slide 4-31

**Suicidal Thoughts and/or Behavior:**

**Approach**

- Inquire directly.
- Get specifics.
- Be empathic.
- Think together about alternatives.
- Instill hope.

As mentioned in the last unit on disorders, those experiencing depression may have suicidal thoughts. Others may also be thinking of killing themselves. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents. Even very young children can have thoughts of killing themselves and have even made attempts.

Remind officers of the lesson they likely learned previously: Asking youth if they are suicidal (“Do you feel like you want to harm or kill yourself?”) will not cause them to become that way. QUITE THE CONTRARY – by asking,
**Training Aids**

**Content/Instructional Delivery Notes**

Officers convey their understanding of just how much distress youth may be feeling.

Although sometimes anxiety-provoking for officers, it is important to allow the youth to talk about all his/her thoughts and feelings. Only after some rapport is established will the youth be receptive to thinking with officers about alternatives.

Youth need to be reminded that the pain they are experiencing will not last forever. Death, however, is forever.

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**Slide 4-32**

**Intervention/De-escalation Summary**

- Use active listening techniques to develop rapport.
- Reflect feelings/be empathic.
- Be consistent/firm.
- Use calming/soothing techniques.
- Problem-solve.

Active listening techniques are the key to de-escalation.

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**Slide 4-33**

**Mental Health Response vs. Criminal Arrest**

- If crime, but no mental illness = Arrest
- If mental illness, but no crime = Diversion
- If crime + mental illness, consider:
  - Seriousness of crime
  - Lethality of risk to self or others
  - Capability of jail/lockup to manage/treat person
  - Wishes/concerns victim has expressed
  - Mental health history
  - Availability of services

Reiterate that CIT programs stress *diversion to evaluation and treatment facilities*, whenever possible.

The first two points on the slide are straightforward. The last one is more challenging – that is, when both crime and mental disorder are present, there are various factors that need to be considered in determining the law enforcement response, as delineated on the slide.

Remind officers that the choice does not always have to be arrest versus diversion; officers can divert initially (when a youth needs further evaluation), but still hold a youth accountable via the legal system if warranted by the incident.
Training Aids

Slide 4-34

Demonstration of De-escalation Techniques
Role play or Video 4.1: Scenario

Content/Instructional Delivery Notes

Although there is minimal time in this day-long course to use role-play exercises, try to use a brief, prepared role-play (asking for volunteers to respond). A script is provided on the next page. Alternatively, a taped example is provided in the PowerPoint (Video 4.1: Scenario - clip length: 9:07).

Ask officers to take notes on: 1) interventions they agreed with and/or ones that worked; 2) interventions they didn’t agree with; 3) other observations or questions.

**Note to Instructor:** If a mental health professional is part of the training team present for this module, he/she should remind officers that they may not often hear about the positive impact they have made on a family, but clinicians do hear about it. Officers’ hard work is not in vain!

**Note to Instructor:** If time allows, consider asking participants to problem-solve a case study (provided at end of unit), either as one large group or divided into two teams.
Materials

Demonstration of De-escalation Techniques

Instructions – Video or Demonstration

Demonstrating the de-escalation skills that have been presented to class participants allows for enhanced skill development. Instructors may demonstrate CIT-Y de-escalation skills via the video clip provided or through a mini scenario demonstration, which provides examples of active listening skills, de-escalation methods, and officer safety tactics.

Demonstration Script

Title: Break-up

Personnel: 1 role player, 1 “student”/“trainee,” 1 coach (role play coordinator)

Props: Backpack with scissors in pocket

Information/Back-Story:

Subject is 15-17 years old. Subject stated to sibling that “life isn’t worth living,” that it is “not worth all the hassles.” Subject also reportedly brought a knife to school, per sibling’s report. Parent called immediately upon hearing sibling’s report because parent was not sure what else to do.

Variation 1: Female subject is only minimally cooperative with interview initially. She answers inquiries in sarcastic tones, but responds well to empathy. Eventually, she admits that break-up with boyfriend is precipitant to crisis. This was her first “true love” and she can’t envision life without him. When asked, she denies having brought a knife to school, but glances briefly at her backpack. A pair of scissors is in the backpack (only discovered if officer searches it). She claims it was for an art project. If asked, she admits to taking five-six pills a few days ago and superficially cutting her wrists yesterday.

Variation 2: Male subject presents similarly to female subject described above. He admits that his true love told him she doesn’t want to see him anymore. He reports he is not sure why, that they had no specific fight. He denies having brought a knife to school and admits that he brought scissors, but is unclear about why he did that.

Variation 3: Same as above, but the backpack is filled with personal items that appear to be of both sentimental and monetary value. For example, female’s backpack has several pieces of jewelry and an MP3 player. Male’s backpack has an autographed football or baseball and other “collectibles.” The point here is that subject was planning to give personal items away to others, an obvious sign that suicide was contemplated. Officer who discovers these items should ask about them.
Instructions

If time allows, you may want to ask participants to problem-solve a case study, either as one large group or divided into two teams. Each case study has elements of communication and de-escalation skills, problem-solving, officer safety, and use of resources imbedded in the potential responses. Facilitate discussion with the groups regarding how and why each type of response was conducted.

Case Study #1

You are assigned to a school. You have been contacted by a student running down the hall who states that the teacher is crying and Debra is out of control in the classroom. You respond to the classroom and find the teacher sobbing at her desk while Debra, a 13-year-old student, is standing on the chair at her desk screaming that the teacher was involved in a porn movie and that the students are all actors. Debra screams that no one is real and they must all stop talking. Someone has broken the cubbies in the room and papers, boots, and backpacks are strewn about the area. The kids in the classroom have mixed reactions: some are fearful, some are laughing, and some are quietly watching. Two girls are trying to get out of the room by sliding along the wall while Debra’s back is turned.

Useful Information

- Debra is known to be on some kind of medication.
- Debra has been transferred twice in the district due to disruptive behavior.
- Debra’s parents have filed a suit against the school, believing that their daughter has been mistreated by school personnel and the School Resource Officer (SRO).
- The teacher has a history of depression which she shared with you during a disturbance in her class last year.
- The principal has been notified and is expected to respond, however she has not arrived yet.
- The former SRO was criticized in the past by school staff and parents for being “too aggressive” in a crisis situation which was investigated and founded. You are newly assigned to this school.

General Questions

1. What is your first priority?
2. How do you approach the room?
3. What kind of communication will be most effective with each of the identified parties?
4. What kind of resources might you offer?
Case Study #2

A call comes in through dispatch that a large group of kids is hanging out at a vacant convenience store parking lot. The reporting party stated the kids are loud and that they are of all ages and all sizes. The caller is sure they are doing drugs and other things that are horrible. The caller became upset when she reported that she also heard someone, probably a girl, screaming. The caller is sure the girl was being hurt – maybe even raped.

When you arrive on the scene, you observe a group of boys standing around a car and rocking it. They are shouting or chanting and there is a trick bicycle lying on the ground near the car. You can’t see into the car, and when you approach the scene, a girl on a bench starts screaming that you arrived too late.

One small boy watches you intently and seems to want to talk to you. Another female, perhaps age 14 or 15, is walking in circles and asking for help from “my god.”

Useful Information

- This parking lot is known for drug sales and gang involvement. A local gang who engages in its own interpretation of “voodoo” practices has recently been tagging the area.
- The girl praying has a history of running away; she has been found several times lying down on the railroad tracks. One officer recognizes her upon arrival.
- The boy seems fearful and appears glued to the bench, yet his eyes follow you and he seems to be mouthing something you can’t hear from your current position.

General Questions

1. What is your first priority?
2. How do you approach the car?
3. What kind of communication will be most effective with each of the identified parties?
4. What kind of resources might you offer?
5. What, if any, difference might it make in this crisis-response situation if the youth involved are of recent Caribbean origin and have maintained a tradition of voodoo practice? What might an officer want to know in advance about this tradition and practice or how the youth have implemented their own “interpretation” of this traditional practice?