
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 279 Session of
2025

INTRODUCED BY STREET, KEARNEY, HUGHES, SCHWANK, COSTA, HAYWOOD
AND KANE, FEBRUARY 25, 2025

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in employees, providing for use of
3 force and deadly force policy for law enforcement agencies;
4 imposing duties on the Municipal Police Officers' Education
5 and Training Commission; and making an editorial change.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Subchapter C heading of Chapter 21 of Title 53 of
9 the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended to read:

10 SUBCHAPTER C

11 [(Reserved)]

12 USE OF FORCE AND DEADLY FORCE POLICY

13 FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

14 Section 2. Subchapter C of Chapter 21 of Title 53 is amended
15 by adding sections to read:

16 § 2141. Policy.

17 It is the policy of the Commonwealth to provide law
18 enforcement agencies and law enforcement officers with clear
19 guidelines and training regarding the use of force and deadly

1 force.

2 § 2142. Definitions.

3 The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter
4 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
5 context clearly indicates otherwise:

6 "Choke hold." A physical maneuver that restricts an
7 individual's ability to breathe for the purposes of
8 incapacitation.

9 "Commission." The Municipal Police Officers' Education and
10 Training Commission.

11 "Deadly force." Force which, under the circumstances in
12 which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or serious
13 bodily injury.

14 "Force." Efforts used by a law enforcement officer that may
15 result in serious bodily injury or death when used to:

16 (1) Effectuate an arrest.

17 (2) Overcome resistance or threatened resistance to
18 effectuate an arrest.

19 (3) Protect the arresting officer or any other person
20 from injury or death.

21 "Law enforcement agency." A law enforcement agency in this
22 Commonwealth that is the employer of a law enforcement officer.

23 "Law enforcement officer." As the term "peace officer" is
24 defined under 18 Pa.C.S. § 501 (relating to definitions).

25 "Serious bodily injury." Bodily injury that creates a
26 substantial risk of death or which causes serious, permanent
27 disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of the function
28 of a bodily member or organ.

29 "Weapon." As follows:

30 (1) Anything readily capable of lethal use and possessed

1 under circumstances not manifestly appropriate for lawful
2 uses which it may have.

3 (2) The term includes a firearm which is not loaded or
4 lacks a clip or other component to render it immediately
5 operable, and components which can readily be assembled into
6 a weapon.

7 § 2143. Written policies required.

8 (a) Development and implementation.--Each law enforcement
9 agency shall develop and implement a written use-of-force policy
10 governing the procedures under which a law enforcement officer
11 should initiate, continue and terminate the use of force. The
12 policy:

13 (1) May be the model use-of-force policy endorsed by a
14 national or State organization or association that is
15 consistent with the requirements of this subchapter.

16 (2) Must reflect consideration of the guidelines under
17 this section.

18 (b) Intent of guidelines.--The guidelines under this
19 section:

20 (1) Are solely intended to direct law enforcement
21 agencies in developing use of force policies and outline the
22 content of these policies.

23 (2) Are not intended to mandate the actions of
24 individual law enforcement officers.

25 (c) Policy guidelines.--Each law enforcement agency use-of-
26 force policy must be consistent with current training and
27 certification standards and include the following procedural
28 elements:

29 (1) Decision-making criteria or principles for
30 initiation of force. These criteria or principles may

1 include:

2 (i) The severity of the crime at issue.

3 (ii) If the suspect poses an immediate threat to the
4 safety of the law enforcement officer or others.

5 (iii) The potential for harm or immediate or
6 potential danger to others if the fleeing individual or
7 individuals escape.

8 (iv) If the suspect is actively resisting arrest or
9 attempting to evade arrest by flight.

10 (v) Safety factors that pose a risk to law
11 enforcement officers and other persons.

12 (vi) If the suspect is in possession of a weapon.

13 (vii) Other relevant information that the law
14 enforcement officer reasonably believes to be true at the
15 time.

16 (2) Responsibilities of law enforcement officers.

17 (3) Responsibilities of the field supervisor.

18 (4) Decision-making criteria or principles for
19 termination of force. The criteria or principles may include
20 safety factors that pose a risk to law enforcement officers
21 and other persons.

22 (5) Recordkeeping protocols for use-of-force incidents.

23 (d) Policy requirements.--Each law enforcement agency use-
24 of-force policy must prohibit the use of choke holds by law
25 enforcement officers except in cases in which deadly force is
26 authorized.

27 (e) Training governing use of force.--

28 (1) Before carrying a weapon, each law enforcement
29 officer must receive training and instruction with regard to
30 the proper use of force and to the law enforcement agency's

1 policies and statutes with regard to force.

2 (2) The training and instruction under this subsection
3 shall continue on an annual basis and may include the
4 following criteria:

5 (i) A law enforcement officer shall carry and use
6 only authorized weapons unless circumstances exist which
7 pose an immediate threat to the safety of the law
8 enforcement officer or the public requiring the use of a
9 weapon or object that has not been authorized to counter
10 a threat.

11 (ii) With law enforcement agency approval, a law
12 enforcement officer may modify, alter or cause to be
13 altered an authorized weapon in the law enforcement
14 officer's possession or control.

15 (iii) A law enforcement officer should use
16 discretion to determine reasonable force options to bring
17 a suspect under control. A law enforcement officer is not
18 required to first attempt using types and degrees of
19 force that reasonably appear to be inadequate to
20 accomplish the intended objective.

21 (iv) A law enforcement officer may announce the
22 intention to use reasonable force.

23 (v) A law enforcement officer should consider
24 whether it is reasonably prudent to use de-escalation and
25 harm reduction techniques.

26 (f) Biennial certification.--

27 (1) Every other year, the commission shall certify
28 whether each law enforcement agency has a use-of-force policy
29 in effect.

30 (2) The commission shall provide the Pennsylvania State

1 Police with a list of those law enforcement agencies that
2 have or have not notified or certified to the commission that
3 the law enforcement agency has a use-of-force policy.

4 (3) The biennial certification may be implemented
5 simultaneously with other certifications conducted by the
6 commission.

7 (g) Policy availability.--A use-of-force policy adopted
8 under this section must be:

9 (1) Posted on the publicly accessible Internet website
10 maintained by the law enforcement agency.

11 (2) Made available in physical form to a member of the
12 general public upon request.

13 (h) Limitations.--A law enforcement agency use-of-force
14 policy must be consistent with the requirements of 18 Pa.C.S.
15 Ch. 5 (relating to general principles of justification).

16 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.