



INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH AND CHILDREN



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I. PURPOSE

This directive provides general guidance for Department members for interacting in a developmentally appropriate manner with youths and children and more specifically with youths and children who are victims, witnesses, offenders, in crisis, and youths and children who have been reported missing, located, or found. The over-arching goal is to minimize harm to the youths and children, while protecting public safety. Informing Department members of alternatives to arrest while connecting at-risks youths and children to diversion services as part of an integrated approach for community safety.

II. POLICY

The Chicago Police Department is committed to:

- A. encouraging officers to exercise discretion by using alternatives to arrest and alternatives to referral to court, including, but not limited to, issuing warnings, offering guidance, and providing referrals to community and social services and resources such as mental health, drug treatment, mentoring, counseling organizations, educational services, and other agencies.
- B. understanding that youths and children are developmentally different from adults and therefore require the use of unique approaches during voluntary contacts, investigatory stops, searches, and custodial contacts.
- C. effectively interacting with youths and children in non-custody situations.
- D. prioritizing the diversion of youths and children away from the Juvenile or Criminal Justice System by using alternatives to arrest to hold youth accountable;
- E. responding and using discretion for incidents involving youths and children in need of mental health treatment with the foremost regard for the preservation of human life.
- F. recognizing that youths and children are afforded the same constitutional protections as adults and acknowledging the need for additional protective measures; and
- G. encouraging officers to avoid taking youths and children into secure custody unless no other effective alternatives exist.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Adult** – A person who is age eighteen years or older.
- B. **Child** – A person under the age of thirteen years old.
- C. **Juvenile** – A person who was seventeen years old or younger when the offense occurred.
- D. **Youth** – A person of the age thirteen to twenty-four years old.

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Youths and children can be more effectively and appropriately served by receiving developmentally appropriate services and support from the Department, the community, and community-based providers when diverted from formal involvement in the Juvenile or Criminal Justice System.

- B. Youths and children's earliest interactions with law enforcement as bystanders, victims, witnesses, or offenders can have a lasting impact on their perceptions of the legitimacy of the justice system.
- C. Youths and children, particularly those who are accused of low-level offenses, achieve better life outcomes and are less likely to commit future offenses when given an appropriate level of intervention that promotes pro-social behavior.
- D. By building healthy relationships with youths and children and creating a positive adult influence, Department members can foster healthy youth development during a wide variety of interactions.

V. INTERACTING WITH YOUTHS AND CHILDREN

During all interactions with youths and children, Department members will:

- A. interact in an unbiased, fair, and respectful manner, including the treatment of all persons involved with dignity, courtesy, and respect regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, immigration status, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, and any person consistent with the policy established in the Department directive titled "[Prohibition Regarding Racial Profiling And Other Bias Based Policing](#)";
- B. follow all rules and responsibilities outlined in the Department directive titled "[Body Worn Cameras](#)" when interacting with youth and children;
- C. remain aware of and protect the rights of youths and children. In all cases, the primary concern will be to safeguard the youth's and the child's emotional and physical well-being. All members will maintain a sensitive approach in responding to these situations to minimize any trauma;
- D. convey a sense of concern and general interest to all youths and children in need of police service;
- E. speak and conduct themselves in a professional manner and maintain a positive attitude;
- F. engage with youths and children in a developmentally appropriate manner, which includes taking into account their age and physical, cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic development;
- G. adhere to the principles of Procedural Justice;
- H. when safe, reasonable, and practical, employ trauma-informed communication techniques, including using a respectful tone and acknowledging any confusion or mistrust by the youth or child to create a safe space for the youth or child to engage in conversation and foster control and choice. (e.g., when Department members are arresting a parent or serving a search warrant in the presence of a youth or a child);
- I. recognize that a youth or a child may not comply right away with orders and that multiple attempts and various force mitigation techniques may be needed (e.g., continual communication and time as a tactic);
- J. make efforts to slow down and not rush through interactions absent an emergency situation;
- K. make efforts to repeat back what the youth or the child says to demonstrate understanding and give an opportunity for clarification;
- L. make efforts to allow time for the youth or child to vent their frustrations and give them an opportunity to comply;
- M. be attentive to the youth's actions over their words;
- N. assess the reasonableness and necessity to apply handcuffs or use physical restraints or other force against them based on the totality of the circumstance, including the youth's apparent age, size, and the threat presented; and
- O. seek out time during their tours of duty to positively interact with youths or children of the community and follow the procedures outlined in the Department directive titled "[Positive Community Interaction](#)" when conducting brief, spontaneous, face-to-face community interactions.

VI. INTERACTING WITH YOUTH AND CHILDREN AS VICTIMS

- A. Upon receipt of an assignment, Department members will proceed immediately to the assignment location unless a supervisor orders the dispatcher to reassign the call for service to another unit.
- B. Members in contact with a youth and conducting a preliminary investigation will:
1. immediately request appropriate medical aid for any injured person and provide appropriate medical care consistent with the member's training;
 2. conduct a thorough and accurate preliminary investigation consistent with the Department directive titled "[Preliminary Investigations](#)";
 3. only interview a youth or child prior to contacting their parent, guardian, or responsible adult if there is an immediate need to render aid, to protect their safety, or to protect public safety;
 4. refer the youth or the child to the appropriate district Community Policing Office or the Youth Investigations Division, which can refer their family to a community agency for assistance if necessary. For a list of citywide community agencies, Department members will refer to the directory titled "[Youth Investigations Community Outreach Directory](#)."
 5. review next steps of the case with the youth or the child's family so a clear understanding of what to expect is established; and
 6. complete and submit all necessary reports and notifications, unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.

NOTE: In cases of sexual abuse/assault, child abuse, neglect, or abandonment, the preliminary investigating officer will follow procedures outlined in the Department directive titled "[Abused, Neglected, Dependent or Abandoned Children Coming Under Department Control](#)."

C. Investigations of Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse

Pursuant to the Bill of Rights for Children ([725 ILCS 115/3.5](#)), every child reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services or law enforcement agency who is a victim of sexual assault or sexual abuse and whose case is accepted for investigation has the right to have that child's forensic interview conducted by a forensic interviewer from the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC), when such service is accessible based on available resources. The right to have a forensic interview by the CCAC may be asserted by the child or the child's parent or guardian. This right may be exercised by the parent or guardian by informing the investigating unit that a forensic interview be conducted by the CCAC.

VII. INTERACTING WITH YOUTH AND CHILD WITNESSES

Youth and child witnesses will not be subject to an interview against their will when communicating with Department members. Department members investigating crimes will:

- A. make reasonable efforts to locate a parent or legal guardian to be present during the interview. If reasonable efforts have failed to secure the presence of a parent or legal guardian, a detective assigned to the appropriate detective area center will be present during the interview consistent with the Department directive titled "[Processing of Juveniles and Minors Under Department Control](#)."
1. The presence of a parent or legal guardian will not be sought during an interview if the offense being investigated involves a victim who is a family member of the youth or child or the parent or legal guardian is an offender of the offense being investigated.
 2. Department members investigating crimes will not interview a youth or a child witness that is not emotionally stable.
- B. ensure the security and privacy of the youth or the child witness to the extent possible;
- C. ensure the comfort and overall well-being of the youth or the child witness to the extent possible; and

- D. use simple, age-appropriate language to ensure the youth or the child understands that their responses are voluntary and that they are free to leave.

NOTE: Department members should not use words or actions that would communicate that the youth or the child is not free to leave or they must answer questions.

VIII. INTERVIEWING YOUTHS AND CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

Department members conducting a preliminary or follow-up investigation in a school during a time period when school is in session will:

- A. proceed directly to the administrative office upon entry to the school and report to the responsible school official in accordance with the Department directive titled "[School Resource Officers and Investigations at Chicago Public Schools.](#)"
- B. notify the school resource officers assigned to the school, if applicable;
- C. describe the member's purpose for entering the school to the school principal or designee and request to interview a named student or other identified individual;
- D. request relevant information from school officials regarding student's disabilities, impairments, or other behavioral modification plan, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP), to the extent allowed under state and federal guidelines.
- E. ensure the school principal or designee a reasonable amount of time to notify the parent or legal guardian of the student prior to beginning the interview, unless there is an emergency, and document the time and manner of the notification or attempted notification;

NOTE: The investigating Department member will inform the school principal or designee when circumstances warrant that this notification should not be made, including when a parent or legal guardian might be the subject of the criminal investigation. If there is a disagreement concerning the notification, the investigating Department member will request a supervisor to respond to the scene.

- F. postpone the interview of the named student temporarily pending a response by the parent or legal guardian to the school, when appropriate;
- G. when a parent or legal guardian is not available:
 - 1. make a reasonable effort to ensure that a school social worker, school nurse, school psychologist, school guidance counselor, or other mental health professional is present during the interview process.
 - 2. if practicable, make reasonable efforts to ensure that a Department member trained in promoting safe interactions and communications with youth is present during the interview.
- H. permit the school principal or designee to be present during the interview of the student whenever the parent or legal guardian cannot be notified, are unavailable to promptly respond to the school, or are potentially the subject of the criminal investigation.

NOTE: The school principal or designee will not be permitted to interfere with the interview or investigative process. If there is a disagreement concerning the interview, the investigating Department member will request a supervisor respond to the scene.

- I. conduct non-emergency interviews with student-victims and student-witnesses in a manner that is least disruptive to the educational and administrative process.

IX. INTERACTING WITH ALLEGED YOUTH AND CHILD OFFENDERS

- A. When a person considered to be a youth or a child is the alleged offender of a crime, the responding Department member will exercise discretion to use alternatives to arrest and referral to court, when applicable and available. In exercising such discretion, the responding Department member will consider all factors of the incident to determining whether an alternative to arrest or a warning may be appropriate, including:
1. the nature and seriousness of the alleged offense;
 2. the age, circumstance, disability, and mental health of the youth or the child;
 3. the prior criminal record of the youth or the child;
 4. the youth's or the child's relationship to the victim(s); and
 5. if the youth or the child is known to have committed repeated offenses.
- B. The Chicago Police Department recognizes that a youth or a child, due to factors beyond their control, may become involved in offenses that bring them into contact with the Juvenile or Criminal Justice System.
- C. To better serve youths and children who are at-risk and in some cases their families, the Chicago Police Department has developed, in cooperation with other agencies, a way of providing services to the youth or the child rather than directly involving them in the Juvenile or Criminal Justice System. The Chicago Police Department will, when appropriate, refer the youth or the child to an agency that can more appropriately meet their needs.
- D. The Chicago Police Department has established a variety of community partnerships and engagement strategies that are designed to encourage positive youth interaction. Department members will refer to the Department directive titled "[Community Policing Mission and Vision](#)" for youth programs.
- E. Department members in contact with youth and child offenders will exercise discretion that is reasonable, is not made for an improper or unlawful purpose, and is consistent with preserving public safety and order. Discretion, when used as an alternative to arrest, may include the following:
1. issue warnings, with no enforcement action taken;
 2. conducting informal counseling to caution youths and children regarding the consequences of their actions;
 3. referring youths and children to community services and resources such as mental health, drug treatment, mentoring, counseling organizations, educational services, and other agencies;
 4. conducting station adjustments; or
 5. issuing civil citations.
- F. If the offender is a juvenile and no enforcement action is taken, Department members will:
1. attempt to make contact with the juvenile's parent, legal guardian, or a responsible adult;
 2. refer the juvenile to the appropriate district Community Policing Office or the Youth Investigations Division in which a Department member can refer the juvenile's family to a community agency for assistance. For a list of citywide community agencies, Department members will refer to the directory titled "[Youth Investigations Community Outreach Directory](#)."
 3. release the juvenile to a parent, legal guardian, or a responsible adult with no further action; and
 4. if applicable, complete an Investigatory Stop Report and follow procedures outlined in the Department directive titled "[Investigatory Stop System](#)."

- G. At all times, Department members will remain aware of and protect the rights of each juvenile who comes under Department control as a perpetrator of a crime. Department members are reminded to use force that is objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional based on the totality of the circumstances, consistent with the Department directive titled "[De-escalation, Response to Resistance, and Use of Force](#)." Department members will follow the procedures outlined in the Department directive titled "[Processing of Juveniles and Minors Under Department Control](#)" when no other alternative to arrest exists and will process the juvenile in an expedient manner, including the procedures outlined for the Juvenile Miranda Warning prior to any custodial interrogation.

REMINDER: When determining the appropriateness of applying handcuffs or other physical restraints to a juvenile, Department members will consider the totality of the circumstances, including, but not limited to, the nature of the incident and the juvenile's age, physical size, actions, and conduct, when known or objectively apparent to the member, and whether such restraints are necessary to provide for the safety of the juvenile, the Department member, or others consistent with the Department directive titled "[Processing of Juveniles and Minors Under Department Control](#)."

X. INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTHS, CHILDREN, AND JUVENILES IN CRISIS

Department members may encounter situations where they must interact with a youth, child, or juvenile in crisis. Department members are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions, emotional conditions, or substance abuse disorders, but rather recognize behaviors that are potentially indicative of an individual in crisis, with special emphasis on those that suggest potential violence or danger to self or to others. Department members will follow the procedures and listed resources outlined in the Department directive titled "[Recognizing and Responding to Individuals In Crisis](#)." Department members will utilize their training and the following guidelines to assist in recognizing individuals in crisis and in need of intervention.

- A. The following are generalized signs and symptoms of behavior that may suggest an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis, but each should be evaluated within the context of the entire situation. Department members should not rule out other potential causes when evaluating the totality of the circumstances, such as alcohol or drugs, temporary emotional crises that are situational, or medical conditions. Department members should be aware that one or more verbal, behavioral, and environmental cues, in combination with a juvenile's or a child's apparent age and physical, cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic development, could suggest the youth or the child is in need of mental health treatment. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Verbal Cues
 - a. statements of harm to self to others;
 - b. statements of worries or fears;
 - c. complaints of stomach pain or headaches with no known medical cause;
 - d. statements of false, fixed beliefs (delusions), e.g., "My food/water/medicine has been poisoned"; "I am Christ."
 - e. statements of false sensory perceptions (hallucinations), e.g., hearing voices that are not audible to anyone else; seeing a TV or newspaper talking directly to him or her; feelings bugs crawl all over skin; seeing things others cannot see, e.g., believing a satellite or streetlight is watching him or her; and
 - f. disorganized or slurred speech, e.g. using incoherent words, phrases, or sounds; rapidly shifting from topic to topic with no connection between thoughts.
2. Behavioral Cues
 - a. causing injury to self (e.g., cutting self, cigarette burns, banging head against the wall);

- b. no longer performing major life activities (e.g., eating, sleeping, poor personal hygiene);
 - c. unusual demeanor (e.g., underdressing/overdressing for weather);
 - d. constant motion, showing an inability to sit quietly;
 - e. experience frequent tantrums and intense irritability throughout the day;
 - f. unusual body movements (e.g., pacing, muscular rigidity, repetitive actions);
 - g. confusion and lack of awareness of surroundings (e.g., wandering in and out of traffic, unable to identify self or location);
 - h. reacting to intrusive, distressing thoughts (e.g., flashbacks or commands to harm self or another);
 - i. extreme emotional responses (e.g., lack of emotion or excessive anxiety/anger);
 - j. unresponsive to verbal commands;
 - k. difficulty with motor skills or loss of coordination (e.g., stumbling, swaying, or dropping things);
 - l. strong and unrelenting fear of persons, places, or things;
 - m. frustration in new or unforeseen circumstances; inappropriate or aggressive behavior in response to the situation;
 - n. obsession with recurrent and uncontrolled thoughts, ideas, and images; and
 - o. extreme confusion, fright, paranoia, or depression.
3. Environmental Cues
- a. written suicide notes or letters;
 - b. have little interest in other children or the need to make friends;
 - c. struggle academically, experiencing a decline in grades;
 - d. excessive hoarding (e.g., garbage, newspapers, animals); and
 - e. presence of urine or feces on the floor or on walls.

B. Department members are reminded that each incident involving a juvenile or a child in crisis is unique and should be approached in an individualistic manner. Department members will interact with youths or children in crisis with dignity and respect.

REMINDER: Department members will refer to the Department directive titled "[Persons Not Under Arrest But In Need of Involuntary or Voluntary Admission](#)" for references concerning the admission of minors.

C. An officer assigned to investigate an incident with a juvenile or a child in crisis will:

1. assess the situation.
2. request a supervisor respond to the scene, if appropriate and available.
3. if not a designated Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer, request a designated CIT officer to assist, if available.

NOTE: If a designated CIT officer is not available to respond to a call or incident involving a juvenile or a child in crisis, the responding officer will engage in crisis intervention response techniques, as appropriate and consistent with Department policy and training, throughout the incident.

4. protect the area, if possible, to limit external stimuli that can agitate the juvenile or the child, escalate the situation, or provide opportunities for the youth or the child to self harm or harm others.
5. use tactical positioning to create distance and mitigate the potential for a threatening response.
6. establish and maintain one-on-one communication with the youth or the child and avoid giving simultaneous directions or having multiple members verbally engaging the youth or the child.
7. listen and speak in a calm and controlled tone of voice to gather the juvenile's or the child's concerns as a de-escalation strategy while helping to defuse fear, anxiety, or insecurity.
8. allow the juvenile or child time to process what is being said.
9. recognize that the juvenile or the child may be overwhelmed by external and internal stimuli.
10. recognize that the juvenile's or the child's delusions and hallucinations are very real for them.

XI. INTERACTING WITH LOCATED OR FOUND YOUTH OR CHILDREN WHO HAD BEEN REPORTED MISSING

- A. Many factors may lead to a youth or a child running away from home, including experiencing social or emotional problems in the home, experiencing abuse or neglect in the home, experiencing an undiagnosed or untreated mental health episode, being trafficked, or other factors that Department members may need to consider when interacting with youths or children who have run away.
- B. Department members will conduct all interactions with located or found youths and children with the utmost empathy and courtesy. During each interaction, Department members are encouraged to use developmentally appropriate and, if relevant, trauma-informed communication skills to identify and determine the reason that caused the youth or the child to be missing from home. Department members will:
 1. listen to the youth or the child to gain trust.
 2. permit time for the youth or the child to express frustrations.
 3. be observant of the youth's or the child's actions and verbiage.
 4. determine the cause of the youth's or the child's reasoning for leaving home and develop a possible solution.

NOTE: Department members who are notified that a missing person has been located or found will follow procedures outlined in the Department directive titled "[Missing/Found Persons](#)."

- C. Department member can refer the youth or child's family to a community agency for assistance. For a list of citywide community agencies, Department members will refer to the directory titled "[Youth Investigations Community Outreach Directory](#)."

Authenticated by MWK

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