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| THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF **PHILADELPHIA** | Safety Bulletin |

DE-ESCALALTION IN PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Verbal De-Escalation is an intervention for use with people who are at risk for aggression. It is basically using calm language, along with other communication techniques, to diffuse, re-direct, or de-escalate a conflicting situation. Verbal de-escalation techniques also assist the communicator in maintaining professional composure in the face of verbal hostility and abuse.

When it just doesn't work – De-escalation Tips

1. **Stay Calm**
   Remaining calm when listening and especially when speaking can work to calm the situation, sometimes to the point that a normal conversation can take place, never argue.

2. **Listen Without Interruption**
   Let them vent. Again, it is the School District the person is angry with, not you. Give the person your full attention, do not cut them off, and just listen.

3. **Never Make Promises You Cannot Keep**
   Understand your position in your organization and what you are able to do for the angry person. Never speak for another employee or Supervisor. Let the person know if you are unable to resolve their issue and if necessary, who to refer them to.

4. **Do Not Argue and Never Say "No"**
   Do not engage the person's argument, no matter what they say. Remember what your role and abilities within the District are. Do not be afraid to tell the person you may have to check with a Supervisor or research their issue.

5. **Suggest Realistic Steps for Resolution**
   After listening, do not be afraid to recap the conversation. It shows empathy and that you are taking the person's complaint seriously. If you can resolve the issue by all means do so. If not, provide a realistic timeline and remember, don't make promises you can't keep.

6. **Never be afraid to say "I don't know".**
   Misinformation or wrong information is usually how we got to this point in the first place. Do not compound the problem by providing any further wrong information. If you are unable to answer a question or are unsure of the answer, inform the person that you will need to get back to them. Assure them your delay is so that you provide accurate information.

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When it just doesn't work – De-escalation Tips *continued*

7. **Communicate**
   Say what you are going to do and then do what you said. There is nothing worse than setting a deadline and not making it. Never tell someone that you will have an issue resolved by the end of the day unless you are sure you will. If at all possible, leave it open ended but keep the person informed. Obtain contact information and advise daily of the status until a resolution is achieved.

8. **Violence or threats of violence**
   Your safety is paramount. There should be a zero-tolerance policy in your organization for any threats or violent behavior. Your policy should dictate what to do in these circumstances and you should become familiar with it in the event it does happen. You should always try to keep some sort of barrier between yourself and the angry persons to lessen the chances of any physical contact. Never be afraid to ask for assistance from a co-worker or Supervisor if you feel unsafe or threatened in any way

Exceptional Response

- Maintain a high level of **professionalism** by following these guidelines
- **Listen and be attentive** to what people's needs
- Communicate using clear and concise business language and remember to **watch body language**
- **Be understanding** of all people and situations, especially where you may have biases that are contrary

Smile, be happy and have fun!
It will always show in the service you give!

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