



SANTA FE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF ADAN MENDOZA

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UNDERSHERIFF KEN JOHNSON

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Date: September 9, 2021

To: All Sheriff's Personnel

From: Sheriff Adan Mendoza

Re: ABLE Policy (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement)

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office has elected to participate in the national Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project. The ABLE Project provides training, technical assistance, and research, all with the aim of creating a police culture in which officers routinely intervene as necessary to:

1. Prevent misconduct
2. Avoid police mistakes
3. Promote officer health and wellness
4. Reduce unnecessary harm to deputies
5. Reduce risk of deputies losing their jobs
6. Improve police/community relations
7. Reduce unnecessary harm to civilians
8. Improve deputy job satisfaction
9. Improve citizen satisfaction with our law enforcement office
10. Reduce risk of lawsuits against the office, county and individual deputies.

Through our participation in the ABLE Project, The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office will deliver practical, scenario-based training for all deputies of the Agency in the strategies and tactics of police peer intervention.

1. Duty to Intervene

Employees of The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office have a moral, ethical, and/or legal duty to intervene to prevent another employee from conduct that would unnecessarily harm others or would violate law or policy. This duty applies regardless of rank. Intervention is required where the bystander employee is witness to and has a reasonable opportunity to prevent or mitigate harm caused by policy or legal violations, or mistakes. Employees are also encouraged to intervene to assist colleagues in addressing health and wellness concerns, even where those concerns are not currently resulting in policy or legal



violations. Employees should intervene in a manner that protects the safety of the community, their colleagues, and themselves to the greatest extent possible.

2. Training

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office ABLE training offers practical strategies and tactics to maximize the effectiveness of interventions when they are necessary, and to ensure, where possible, interventions are handled safely, professionally, and respectfully. All deputies and employees, including Agency leaders, will receive at least 8 hours of initial dedicated ABLE training and at least 2 hours of annual ABLE refresher training. Training will be conducted with complete fidelity to the ABLE curriculum, and in a manner consistent with all ABLE program guidelines. ABLE training will be taught to classes of 30 or fewer officers (20-25 preferred) by two ABLE-certified instructors. The principles of active bystandership also will be incorporated into relevant Academy (recruit and in-service) courses, including, among others, Use of Force, Stop/Search/Arrest, Report Writing, Traffic Stops, Ethics, Vehicle Pursuits, and Field Training Officer training. ABLE-certified instructors may be called upon to provide training to surrounding ABLE-certified law enforcement agencies, per the ABLE Program Standards.

3. Training for ABLE Instructors

All ABLE instructors must have been certified through the Train-the-Trainer process offered by the ABLE Project. ABLE instructors will review supplemental teaching materials, participate in supplemental training programs, and attend annual refresher training provided by the ABLE Project.

4. Program Leadership

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office has designated an ABLE Program Coordinator who resides within the Sheriff's Office training division. The ABLE Program Coordinator is responsible for leading the implementation of ABLE, including the roll out, promotion, and reinforcement of the program, and for playing an active role in embedding ABLE in the Agency's organizational culture. The Program Coordinator will provide guidance and assistance to employees as necessary. The Program Coordinator also will work with Agency leadership to ensure the Agency is meeting the ABLE Program Standards. The Program Coordinator will report program status (e.g., number of officers trained) to the ABLE Project, as requested.



5. Program Reinforcement

Supervisors at all levels will reinforce the core principles of active bystandership during roll calls and other appropriate agency activities.

6. Investigations

The Sheriff or his designee will investigate all apparent instances of a failure to intervene, whether discovered during the course of any use of force review, misconduct investigation, a community oversight review, or by any other means.

7. Discipline Mitigation

Discipline must be adjudicated consistently, and a similar violation should receive a similar penalty. There are often aggravating and mitigating circumstances of an offense that may impact the appropriateness of a given penalty. Because Santa Fe County supports deputies who intervene to prevent misconduct, mistakes, and deputy health/wellness problems, an effective intervention that was accepted by the accused deputy will be considered a mitigating factor for both the accused deputy and the intervening deputy in any discipline resulting from the underlying activity that prompted the need for the intervention.

8. Reporting

ABLE is not a reporting program, policy, or rule. The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office intentionally has decided to adopt ABLE principles as a foundational element of our organizational values with the intent to help teach deputies practical strategies and skills to effectively intervene in another deputy's conduct, regardless of rank, when necessary to prevent misconduct, reduce mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness. ABLE does not alter the Agency's reporting policies. If an action was reportable pursuant to Agency policy before the adoption of ABLE, it continues to be reportable following the adoption of ABLE. If an action was not reportable before ABLE, it did not become so after ABLE.

9. No Retaliation

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office promotes and supports intervention to protect the community we serve and one another, and will not tolerate retaliation against an employee for exercising their duty to intervene. Nor will employees who engage in a good faith act of intervention to promote employee health or wellness be subject to retaliation. A good faith intervention is considered a protected activity. This commitment is part of The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office commitment to providing a culture in



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which employees are free from harassment and retaliation of any kind. Acts of harassment and retaliation are forms of serious misconduct and will result in investigation and appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

10. Evaluations and Promotions

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office is committed to developing and promoting deputies who demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to active bystandership. Concrete steps taken to employ ABLÉ skills and promote the principles of ABLÉ will be recognized during the evaluation/promotion process.

11. Insignia

ABLE instructors will be permitted to wear their authorized ABLÉ Instructor Pin on their uniforms.