



# ZIONSVILLE

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Media Contact:**

Amanda Vela | (317) 873-1585 | [www.zionsville-in.gov](http://www.zionsville-in.gov) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

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### **Zionsville Police Department focuses on mental health and de-escalation training**

Zionsville Police Department officers are participating in two new programs: de-escalation training and REACH (Resources, Evaluating, Assisting in Community Health). As part of these programs, ZPD officers are being trained on nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts.

Beginning today, ZPD officers are participating in the Realistic De-Escalation Instructor Course. Four officers will complete this two-day training and then teach it back to all department officers. The goal of the program is to equip officers with the scientific knowledge of resolution methods for potentially violent confrontations between officers and subjects. Officers will learn concepts and methods that support de-escalation efforts and will be given knowledge on how to help people who are in a state of mental health crisis or whose perception of reality is altered. This will help officers assess the circumstances accurately and defuse those situations without violence when possible.

One of Chief Spears' goals has been to create a use of force model that clearly identifies strategies for de-escalation. This course helps accomplish that goal.

"The Zionsville Police Department is committed to professionalism and ensuring officers receive the most contemporary instruction in techniques to resolve situations without the use of force," said Chief Spears. "The De-Escalation Instructor training helps officers be better prepared to serve our community and increase safety for all. Police officers from other agencies within and outside of Indiana are scheduled to attend this training. I am extremely proud of our police department as we facilitate this valuable training and help lead the way to resolving potentially dangerous situations in a peaceful manner."

After this training, officers will have better skills in establishing contact and building rapport.

"With the amount of civil unrest and the focus on police use of force situations, it's necessary for all officers to go through this course in hopes of sharpening their skills," said Det. Elizabeth Frost. "Officers on patrol use de-escalation tactics on a daily basis and we are proud that our officers do so successfully far more often than not. In fact, we have yet to have a use of force situation in 2020. This doesn't mean we can't improve. Even if officers can just learn one small thing from this training, it could mean preventing tragedy."

As part of ZPD's REACH program, officers are focusing on public safety, mental health and personal and community wellness to reduce the risk of injury for first responders and individuals in crisis, reduce and prevent crime, maximize self-sufficiency and improve quality of life. These efforts are planned and implemented in partnership with community partners, service providers and citizens.

“Since starting with Zionsville Police Department, one of the first things Chief Spears did, even before George Floyd’s death, was to begin reviewing our policies and to align them with a standard that is recognized across the country,” said Mayor Emily Styron. “Earlier this year we announced the Use of Force review board. Members will investigate instances of when force of any kind is used and make recommendations to Chief Spears. Also, this year members of the Zionsville Police Department have received specific training on implicit bias and systemic racism. Chief Spears and I are aligned in that fairness, respect and compassion for others are our priorities and expectations for police officers.”

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