## 709.1. USE OF FORCE POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. Purpose

School entities must prepare to meet any and all threats both internal and external to students and employees within the District. School entities should respond with a balanced and reasoned “all hazards” approach to any potential threat. Even though the odds of a school attack are relatively low, school entities must program protective measures permanently into their emergency response processes.

The Pottsville Area School District acknowledges that recent school incidents involving violence require that it take a pro-active approach. It is the intention of the Pottsville Area School District to provide protection within its building by utilizing armed security officers. These armed security officers will in fact be off-duty and/or retired law enforcement officers. All such security personnel must meet all of the educational and training requirements including all continuing education and continuing required training that would permit them to serve as police officers on the City of Pottsville Police Force.

The purpose of this policy is to provide Pottsville Area School District security personnel with guidelines on the use of deadly and non-deadly force. The Pottsville Area School District recognizes and respects the value and integrity of each human life. Investing security officers with the lawful authority to use force to protect the public welfare requires a careful balancing of all human interests. Therefore, it is the policy of the Pottsville Area School District that school security officers shall use only that force that is reasonably necessary to effectively bring an incident under control, while protecting the lives of the officers and others.

### 2. Authority

**Parameters for Use of Deadly Force**

1. Security officers are authorized to use deadly force including the discharge of their firearms in order to:

   a. protect the security officer or others from what is reasonably believed to be a threat of death or serious bodily harm,
b. prevent the escape of a fleeing felon whom the officer has probable cause to believe will pose a significant threat to human life should escape occur.

2. Before discharging a firearm, security officers shall, where safely possible, identify themselves and state their intent to shoot.

3. Security officers shall adhere to the following restrictions when their weapon is exhibited:

   a. Except for maintenance or during training, security officers shall not draw or exhibit their firearms unless circumstances create reasonable cause to believe that it may be necessary to use the weapon in conformance with this policy.

   b. Officers are prohibited from firing warning shots under any circumstances.

   c. Officers are prohibited from firing into crowds.

   d. Security officers should refrain from firing into buildings, through doors, windows or other openings.

   e. Officers shall not discharge a firearm from a moving vehicle except under the following conditions:

      1) As a last resort of self-defense when the actor is using deadly force by means other than the vehicle.

      2) As a last resort measure of self-defense, when a vehicle is being driven in a manner deliberately intended to kill or injure an officer or other person.

      3) As a last resort to prevent the escape of a fleeing felon when the use of deadly force is otherwise justified.

**Parameters for the Use of Non-Deadly Force**

1. Where deadly force is not authorized, officers shall use only that level of force on the force continuum that is reasonably necessary to de-escalate the incident and bring it under control.

2. Officers are authorized to use the police department approved non-deadly force techniques and issued equipment for resolution of incidents as follows:

   a. to protect himself/herself or another from physical harm.
b. to restrain or subdue a resistant individual.

c. to bring an unlawful situation safely and effectively under control.

Use of Force Continuum

The following is a use of force continuum that will serve as a guideline for officers when deciding the appropriate level of force to be used. Nothing in this continuum will require that officers use all lower levels of force before using the appropriate level. Circumstances and reasonableness will determine what level of force on the continuum that an officer will employ.

1. Social control: Presence of law enforcement representative.


3. Control modes without weapons: Holding/stunning/direct mechanical.


5. Firearms and other lethal force.

3. Definitions

**Deadly force** - any use of force that is likely to cause death or serious bodily harm.  
18 Pa. C.S. § 501

**Non-deadly force** – any use of force other than that which is considered deadly force.

**Security/police officer** – any person who by virtue of his office or public employment is vested by law with a duty to maintain public order or to make arrests for offenses, whether a duty extends to all offenses or is limited to specific offenses.  
18 Pa. C.S. § 501

4. Guidelines

All armed security officers contracted by the Pottsville Area School District who are also currently certified law enforcement officers within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall act according to the laws of the Commonwealth when observing actions constituting a felony offense. Any and all school district regulations pertaining to the use of force as a school employee shall be superseded by the law enforcement officer’s legally authorized actions with respect to PA Title 42, §§ 8951-8954.
These security officers shall handle their firearms and other weapons in strict compliance with the City of Pottsville Departmental Policy in place by the Pottsville Bureau of Police. Security officers shall meet all qualifications to carry firearms as set forth in the City of Pottsville Departmental Policy in place by the Pottsville Bureau of Police.

This policy is not intended to create doubt in the mind of an officer at a moment when action is critical and there is little time for mediation or reflection. It provides basic guidelines to govern the use of deadly force so that officers can be confident in exercising judgment as to the use of deadly force.