Introduction:

Correctional agencies are responsible for ensuring the safety in correctional programs. To achieve this goal, it may be necessary for correctional staff to use legally authorized force to respond to resistance and other situations.

Policy Statement:

Correctional agencies are committed to exercising an appropriate use of force consistent with statutory requirements and the needs of the situation. Use of force consists of intervention with an offender to promote safety, control behavior and enforce order. Use of force includes use of restraints (other than for routine transportation and movement), chemical agents, electronic devices and weapons. Force is justified only in instances of self-defense, protection of others, protection of property, prevention of escapes, and maintaining or regaining control, and then only as a last resort and in accordance with appropriate statutory authority.

To ensure that the use of force is appropriate and justifiable, correctional agencies should establish and maintain policies and procedures that:

A. Prohibit the use of force as a retaliatory or disciplinary measure; establish strategies to reduce and prevent the need to use force; authorize force only when no reasonable alternative is possible; and advocate that force used be the minimum amount necessary;

B. Define the range of methods for and alternatives to physical response, and that specify the conditions under which each is permitted. These policies must assign responsibility for authorizing the use of physical force; outline the steps for appropriate implementation of the use of physical force; provide for close monitoring of the person while in restraints; and require proper documentation, administrative review, investigation and remedial action;
C. Provide ongoing specialized staff training designed to teach staff to anticipate, stabilize and defuse situations that might give rise to conflict, confrontation and violence and that ensures staff's competency in the use of all methods and equipment in the use of force;

D. Establish and maintain procedures that limit the use of deadly force to those instances where it is legally authorized and where there is an imminent threat to human life or to public safety;

E. Prohibit restraint techniques that cause or could cause partial or complete impairment of respiratory exchange (positional asphyxia) such as the hogtie position or certain restraints on the neck, or those that cause or could cause partial or complete paralysis;

F. In consultation with health care staff, refrain from the use of physical restraints on pregnant females; and

G. Whenever possible, assure that age, gender, health and mental health status are considered prior to initiating the use of force and that the least restrictive and/or least likely type to cause impairment/harm is utilized. Medical conditions such as pregnancy, respiratory ailments, advanced age, physically debilitating diseases, acute psychotic states, delusions and dementias create an increased risk of serious injury and should be factored into the decision regarding which response is appropriate for the situation.

This Public Correctional Policy was unanimously ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Winter Conference in Orlando, FL on January 18, 1985. It was last reviewed and reaffirmed at the 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego, CA on January 11, 2020.