

DISORDERLY PATRONS

PRESENTED BY THE BURLINGTON POLICE
DEPARTMENT

The following are some tips for dealing with patrons or customers that have become upset, confrontational or otherwise disorderly.

These are general guidelines based on current best practices; we recommend that you consult legal counsel prior to implementing any formal changes or policies.

REMAIN SAFE

The most important part of any interaction with an unhappy customer is to remain safe and to keep others safe. Your own safety and the safety of others is paramount and under no circumstances should you do anything that places you or anyone else in danger.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Many times, patrons who are upset are seeking to have their complaint heard by someone who they feel is actively listening to what they have to say. This does not mean that you validate their complaint, or agree with them, merely that you listen.

Active listening skills include focusing on the person who is speaking, restating what they have said to communicate that you are indeed listening, echoing their last phrase, and summarizing their statements. When this is done, advise them that you will forward their complaint to

management and you can then restate your original position – whatever it may be.

DEESCALATION

By presenting a calm demeanor throughout the listening period, and by remaining calm and collected you are presenting them with a neutral front. Your lack of mutual aggression may serve to calm the situation.

Remain calm and reiterate to the person that he/she, too, should calm down and speak with you in a reasonable tone.

OFFER CHOICE

People often times do not like to be told what to do, and in cases like this you can offer them choices that are only beneficial to you. They can choose to comply with what you want them to do, they can choose to leave on their own, or they can choose to leave under police escort. The choice is theirs to make, and you are simply reading them the menu of choices that they have. There are no other choices – it is a limited menu.

GENERATE SPACE

By the time you have reached this stage, oftentimes the individual has made it clear that they are not leaving. Inform them that by not choosing to leave and not choosing to calm down, they have chosen by default to leave under police escort. Disengage politely from them by backing away steadily, maintaining visual contact, and begin the process of calling the police.

Use of present objects such as a table, a serving bar, a countertop, display case or other item as a barrier between yourself and the person is also a good way to generate this space, and keeping the person from having direct access to you.

GATHER INFORMATION

The police dispatcher and responding officers will need some information about the person. Most important will be the persons description. Their physical makeup – height, build, race, gender, hair color and length; their clothing – headgear, jacket, shirt, trousers, footwear, bags/backpacks; and anything of note such as visible tattoos. Any weapons that you observe, or things that can be used as a weapon such as a walking stick, pocketknife, or similar items should be told to the dispatcher as well. If the individual leaves, make sure to see which way they go, and if they get into a vehicle what it looks like, and a license plate if possible.

MEET WITH THE OFFICER

When the officer arrives, wait to be approached. Wave to the officer, but do not approach him/her, he/she will come to you with questions. Do not speak to the person – the officer will do that for you. The person has chosen to take it past you and must now deal with the officer.