

**CHAPTER 12.1-05**  
**JUSTIFICATION - EXCUSE - AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES**

**12.1-05-01. Justification.**

1. Except as otherwise expressly provided, justification or excuse under this chapter is a defense.
2. If a person is justified or excused in using force against another, but he recklessly or negligently injures or creates a risk of injury to other persons, the justifications afforded by this chapter are unavailable in a prosecution for such recklessness or negligence.
3. That conduct may be justified or excused within the meaning of this chapter does not abolish or impair any remedy for such conduct which is available in any civil action.

**12.1-05-02. Execution of public duty.**

1. Conduct engaged in by a public servant in the course of the person's official duties is justified when it is required or authorized by law.
2. A person who has been directed by a public servant to assist that public servant is justified in using force to carry out the public servant's direction, unless the action directed by the public servant is plainly unlawful.
3. A person is justified in using force upon another to effect that person's arrest or prevent that person's escape when a public servant authorized to make the arrest or prevent the escape is not available if the other person has committed, in the presence of the actor, any crime which the actor is justified in using force to prevent, or if the other person has committed a felony involving force or violence.
4. Conduct engaged in by an individual at the direction of a public servant, known by that individual to be a law enforcement officer, to assist in the investigation of a criminal offense is justified unless the individual knows or has a firm belief, unaccompanied by substantial doubt, that the conduct is not within the law enforcement officer's official duties or authority. For purposes of this subsection, conduct "not within the law enforcement officer's official duties or authority" is conduct in which the law enforcement officer alone could not lawfully engage in that officer's official capacity. When practicable, permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian of a minor who is under the age of eighteen years and is neither married nor in the military service of the United States before the minor may engage in conduct, other than the providing of information, to assist in a criminal investigation under the direct supervision of a public servant.

**12.1-05-03. Self-defense.**

A person is justified in using force upon another person to defend himself against danger of imminent unlawful bodily injury, sexual assault, or detention by such other person, except that:

1. A person is not justified in using force for the purpose of resisting arrest, execution of process, or other performance of duty by a public servant under color of law, but excessive force may be resisted.
2. A person is not justified in using force if:
  - a. He intentionally provokes unlawful action by another person to cause bodily injury or death to such other person; or
  - b. He has entered into a mutual combat with another person or is the initial aggressor unless he is resisting force which is clearly excessive in the circumstances. A person's use of defensive force after he withdraws from an encounter and indicates to the other person that he has done so is justified if the latter nevertheless continues or menaces unlawful action.

**12.1-05-04. Defense of others.**

A person is justified in using force upon another person in order to defend anyone else if:

1. The person defended would be justified in defending himself; and

2. The person coming to the defense has not, by provocation or otherwise, forfeited the right of self-defense.

**12.1-05-05. Use of force by persons with parental, custodial, or similar responsibilities.**

The use of force upon another person is justified under any of the following circumstances:

1. Except as provided in section 15.1-19-02, a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care and supervision of a minor, or other person responsible for the care and supervision of a minor for a special purpose, or a person acting at the direction of any of the foregoing persons, may use reasonable force upon the minor for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the minor's welfare, including prevention and punishment of the minor's misconduct, and the maintenance of proper discipline. The force may be used for this purpose, whether or not it is "necessary" as required by subsection 1 of section 12.1-05-07. The force used must not create a substantial risk of death, serious bodily injury, disfigurement, or gross degradation.
2. A guardian or other person responsible for the care and supervision of an incompetent person, or a person acting at the direction of the guardian or responsible person, may use reasonable force upon the incompetent person for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the incompetent person's welfare, including the prevention of the incompetent person's misconduct or, when the incompetent person is in a hospital or other institution for care and custody, for the purpose of maintaining reasonable discipline in the institution. The force may be used for these purposes, whether or not it is "necessary" as required by subsection 1 of section 12.1-05-07. The force used must not create a substantial risk of death, serious bodily injury, disfigurement, or gross degradation.
3. A person responsible for the maintenance of order in a vehicle, train, vessel, aircraft, or other carrier, or in a place where others are assembled, or a person acting at the responsible person's direction, may use force to maintain order.
4. A duly licensed physician, or a person acting at a duly licensed physician's direction, may use force in order to administer a recognized form of treatment to promote the physical or mental health of a patient if the treatment is administered:
  - a. In an emergency;
  - b. With the consent of the patient, or, if the patient is a minor or an incompetent person, with the consent of the patient's parent, guardian, or other person entrusted with the patient's care and supervision; or
  - c. By order of a court of competent jurisdiction.
5. A person may use force upon another person, about to commit suicide or suffer serious bodily injury, to prevent the death or serious bodily injury of such other person.

**12.1-05-06. Use of force in defense of premises and property.**

Force is justified if it is used to prevent or terminate an unlawful entry or other trespass in or upon premises, or to prevent an unlawful carrying away or damaging of property, if the person using such force first requests the person against whom such force is to be used to desist from his interference with the premises or property, except that a request is not necessary if it would be useless or dangerous to make the request or substantial damage would be done to the property sought to be protected before the request could effectively be made.

**12.1-05-07. Limits on the use of force - Excessive force - Deadly force.**

1. An individual is not justified in using more force than is necessary and appropriate under the circumstances.
2. Deadly force is justified in the following instances:
  - a. When it is expressly authorized by law or occurs in the lawful conduct of war.
  - b. When used in lawful self-defense, or in lawful defense of others, if such force is necessary to protect the actor or anyone else against death, serious bodily injury, or the commission of a felony involving violence. The use of deadly force is not

justified if it can be avoided, with safety to the actor and others, by retreat or other conduct involving minimal interference with the freedom of the individual menaced. An individual seeking to protect another individual must, before using deadly force, try to cause the other individual to retreat, or otherwise comply with the requirements of this provision, if safety can be obtained thereby. However, the duty to retreat or avoid force does not apply under the following circumstances:

- (1) A public servant justified in using force in the performance of the public servant's duties or an individual justified in using force in assisting the public servant need not desist from the public servant's or individual's efforts because of resistance or threatened resistance by or on behalf of the other individual against whom the public servant's or individual's action is directed; and
  - (2) An individual is not required to retreat within or from that individual's dwelling or place of work or from an occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01, unless the individual was the original aggressor or is assailed by another individual who the individual knows also dwells or works there or who is lawfully in the motor home or travel trailer.
- c. When used by an individual in possession or control of a dwelling, place of work, or an occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01, or by an individual who is licensed or privileged to be there, if the force is necessary to prevent commission of arson, burglary, robbery, or a felony involving violence upon or in the dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer, and the use of force other than deadly force for these purposes would expose any individual to substantial danger of serious bodily injury.
  - d. When used by a public servant authorized to effect arrests or prevent escapes, if the force is necessary to effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of an individual who has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving violence, or is attempting to escape by the use of a deadly weapon, or has otherwise indicated that the individual is likely to endanger human life or to inflict serious bodily injury unless apprehended without delay.
  - e. When used by a guard or other public servant, if the force is necessary to prevent the escape of a prisoner from a detention facility, unless the guard or public servant knows that the prisoner is not an individual as described in subdivision d. A detention facility is any place used for the confinement, pursuant to a court order, of an individual charged with or convicted of an offense, charged with being or adjudicated a juvenile delinquent, held for extradition, or otherwise confined under court order.
  - f. When used by a duly licensed physician, or an individual acting at the physician's direction, if the force is necessary to administer a recognized form of treatment to promote the physical or mental health of a patient and if the treatment is administered in an emergency; with the consent of the patient, or, if the patient is a minor or an incompetent person, with the consent of the patient's parent, guardian, or other person entrusted with the patient's care and supervision; or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction.
  - g. When used by an individual who is directed or authorized by a public servant, and who does not know that the public servant is not authorized to use deadly force under the circumstances.

**12.1-05-07.1. Use of deadly force - Presumption of fear of death or serious bodily injury.**

1. An individual is presumed to have held a reasonable fear of imminent peril of death or serious bodily injury to that individual or another when using deadly force if:
  - a. The individual against whom the deadly force was used was in the process of unlawfully and forcibly entering, or had unlawfully and forcibly entered and remains within a dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01, or if the individual had removed or was attempting

- to remove another against that individual's will from the dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01; and
- b. The individual who uses deadly force knew or had reason to believe that an unlawful and forcible entry or unlawful and forcible act was occurring or had occurred.
2. The presumption in subsection 1 may be rebutted by proof beyond a reasonable doubt that the individual who used the deadly force did not have a reasonable fear of imminent peril of death or serious bodily injury to that individual or another.
  3. The presumption in subsection 1 does not apply if the court finds that any of the following have occurred:
    - a. The individual against whom the deadly force is used has the right to be in or is a lawful resident of the dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01, including an owner, lessee, or titleholder, and there is not a temporary or permanent domestic violence protection order or any other order of no contact against that individual;
    - b. The individual removed or sought to be removed is a child or grandchild, or is otherwise in the lawful custody or under the lawful guardianship of, the individual against whom the deadly force is used;
    - c. The individual who uses deadly force is engaged in the commission of a crime or is using the dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01 to further the commission of a crime; or
    - d. The individual against whom the deadly force is used is a law enforcement officer who enters or attempts to enter a dwelling, place of work, or occupied motor home or travel trailer as defined in section 39-01-01 in the performance of official duties and the officer provided identification, if required, in accordance with any applicable law or warrant from a court, or if the individual using force knew or reasonably should have known that the individual entering or attempting to enter was a law enforcement officer.

**12.1-05-07.2. Immunity from civil liability for justifiable use of force.**

1. An individual who uses force as permitted under this chapter is immune from civil liability for the use of the force to the individual against whom force was used or to that individual's estate unless that individual is a law enforcement officer who was acting in the performance of official duties and the officer provided identification, if required, in accordance with any applicable law or warrant from a court, or if the individual using force knew or reasonably should have known that the individual was a law enforcement officer.
2. The court shall award reasonable attorney's fees and court costs and disbursements incurred by the defendant in defense of any civil action brought by a plaintiff if the court finds that the defendant is immune from civil liability as provided in subsection 1.

**12.1-05-08. Excuse.**

A person's conduct is excused if he believes that the facts are such that his conduct is necessary and appropriate for any of the purposes which would establish a justification or excuse under this chapter, even though his belief is mistaken. However, if his belief is negligently or recklessly held, it is not an excuse in a prosecution for an offense for which negligence or recklessness, as the case may be, suffices to establish culpability. Excuse under this section is a defense or affirmative defense according to which type of defense would be established had the facts been as the person believed them to be.

**12.1-05-09. Mistake of law.**

Except as otherwise expressly provided, a person's good faith belief that conduct does not constitute a crime is an affirmative defense if he acted in reasonable reliance upon a statement of the law contained in:

1. A statute or other enactment.

2. A judicial decision, opinion, order, or judgment.
3. An administrative order or grant of permission.
4. An official interpretation of the public servant or body charged by law with responsibility for the interpretation, administration, or enforcement of the law defining the crime.

**12.1-05-10. Duress.**

1. In a prosecution for any offense, it is an affirmative defense that the actor engaged in the proscribed conduct because he was compelled to do so by threat of imminent death or serious bodily injury to himself or to another. In a prosecution for an offense which does not constitute a felony, it is an affirmative defense that the actor engaged in the proscribed conduct because he was compelled to do so by force or threat of force. Compulsion within the meaning of this section exists only if the force, threat, or circumstances are such as would render a person of reasonable firmness incapable of resisting the pressure.
2. The defense defined in this section is not available to a person who, by voluntarily entering into a criminal enterprise, or otherwise, willfully placed himself in a situation in which it was foreseeable that he would be subjected to duress. The defense is also unavailable if he was negligent in placing himself in such a situation, whenever negligence suffices to establish culpability for the offense charged.

**12.1-05-11. Entrapment.**

1. It is an affirmative defense that the defendant was entrapped into committing the offense.
2. A law enforcement agent perpetrates an entrapment if, for the purpose of obtaining evidence of the commission of a crime, the law enforcement agent induces or encourages and, as a direct result, causes another person to engage in conduct constituting such a crime by employing methods of persuasion or inducement which create a substantial risk that such crime will be committed by a person other than one who is ready to commit it. Conduct merely affording a person an opportunity to commit an offense does not constitute entrapment.
3. In this section "law enforcement agent" includes personnel of federal and local law enforcement agencies as well as state agencies, and any person cooperating with such an agency.

**12.1-05-12. Definitions.**

In this chapter:

1. "Deadly force" means force which a person uses with the intent of causing, or which he knows creates a substantial risk of causing, death or serious bodily injury. A threat to cause death or serious bodily injury, by the production of a weapon or otherwise, so long as the actor's intent is limited to creating an apprehension that he will use deadly force if necessary, does not constitute deadly force.
2. "Dwelling" means any building or structure, though movable or temporary, or a portion thereof, which is for the time being a person's home or place of lodging.
3. "Force" means physical action, threat, or menace against another, and includes confinement.
4. "Premises" means all or any part of a building or real property, or any structure, vehicle, or watercraft used for overnight lodging of persons, or used by persons for carrying on business therein.