



# ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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SHERIFF-CORONER  
SANDRA HUTCHENS

## OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

August 27, 2015

Honorable Glenda Sanders  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, California 92701

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury 2014-2015 report, "The Mental Illness Revolving Door: A Problem for Police, Hospitals, and the Health Care Agency."

Dear Judge Sanders:

In accordance with Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, enclosed please find the response to the FY 2014-2015 Orange County Grand Jury report, "The Mental Illness Revolving Door: A Problem for Police, Hospitals, and the Health Care Agency."

If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Sheriff Linda Solorza at (714) 647-4590.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sandra Hutchens'.

Sandra Hutchens  
Sheriff-Coroner

Cc: Peter Hersh, Grand Jury Foreman  
Members, Board of Supervisors  
Frank Kim, County Executive Officer

## **FINDINGS**

### **F.1**

**Deputy Sheriffs and police officers receive insufficient training on how to evaluate and handle the mentally ill in the field.**

**Response:** *Disagrees with findings*

The Orange County Sheriff's Department provides significantly more mental health specific training than required by the California Peace Officer Standards and Training mandates. Sworn personnel receive 21 hours of mental health specific training while attending the basic academy. This is over three times the POST requirement of 6 hours. All sworn personnel are assigned to custody or court operations following the basic academy and before being assigned to patrol or investigations. Our personnel are exposed to persons suffering from mental illness on a daily basis, which significantly enhances the development of their expertise in recognizing mental health related behaviors and symptoms. The training received from the basic academy is used on a regular basis for crisis intervention and de-escalation of volatile situations.

The role of deputy sheriffs and police officers has continued to become more complex and demanding. Standardized and Continued Professional Training have been the hallmarks in keeping pace with the changing demands placed on the law enforcement community. While it is not the role of the deputy or officer to make a clinical diagnosis, making informed behavioral evaluations and employing the appropriate tactics is crucial when dealing with the mentally ill. This is being accomplished through basic training, work experience, and continued professional training offered through the Sheriff's Training Division and our regional training partners.

### **F.2**

**Deputy Sheriffs and police officers receive insufficient training regarding Laura's Law.**

**Response:** *Agrees with findings*

Providing training on the application of Laura's Law to all first responders would increase its effectiveness while enabling the first responder to provide more comprehensive services to the public they serve.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **R.1**

**All law enforcement officers should receive at least 40 hours of comprehensive Crisis Intervention Training on how to handle and evaluate the mentally ill in the field with periodic refresher training.**

**Response:** *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

Mandating 40 hour Crisis Intervention Training Course would provide a temporary measure to mitigate confrontations between those in mental health crisis as they interact with law

enforcement. To be truly effective on a long term basis, a shorter duration of training offered on a frequent periodic basis would be far more effective to the student and more cost efficient for the municipality. For instance, it would be more beneficial to provide an initial class offering 12 hours, followed up by 8 hours of *standardized* training to *all* sworn officers throughout the county every two years. This keeps the topic fresh in the student's memory as well as providing up to date information each year. Mandating a 40 hour annual training course, of any single discipline, would create a tremendous burden on public safety budgets. Without significant additional funding mechanisms this would be difficult to attain.

Since 2007, the Sheriff's department has provided almost 19,000 hours of mental health specific training to over 2,000 attendees. Many law enforcement agencies in Orange County do provide training which includes: policy directives, a ride along program with mental health professionals, briefing training videos, and crisis intervention training.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department remains committed to providing the highest quality law enforcement services possible. Although POST does not mandate ongoing training in this field, the Sheriff's Department provides additional mental health related courses on an ongoing basis. The Sheriff's Department will continue to offer optional mental health training to first responder personnel in conjunction with ongoing collaborative efforts with outside resources such as the Psychiatric Evaluation Team, Centralized Assessment Team, Psychological Emergency Response Team and private service providers.

## **R.2**

**All law enforcement officers should receive mandatory and specific training regarding Laura's Law.**

**Response:** *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

Incorporating training on Laura's Law into ongoing standardized training would be beneficial and act as a force multiplier in dealing with those in sustained mental crisis. Briefing or roll call training, including job aid reference handouts, would be the most efficient method of delivery.

The Sheriff's Field Training Bureau is collaborating with the Orange County Health Care Agency to deliver training and reference material regarding Laura's law to Sheriff's personnel.