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September 30, 2015

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

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

Honorable Judge Sanders:

The Irvine Police Department has received and reviewed the 2014-2015 Grand Jury report dated June 26, 2015, including the findings and recommendations for law enforcement in Orange County. In response to that report, and in accordance with Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, please find attached our response to these findings and recommendations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 949-724-7101.

Sincerely,

David L. Maggard, Jr.
Chief of Police

Attachment

F.1. Deputy Sheriffs and police officers receive insufficient training on how to evaluate and handle the mentally ill in the field.

The Irvine Police Department agrees with this finding in part.

Police officers with the Irvine Police Department are required to attend a 16-hour Post Certified Mental Health Awareness class sponsored by Golden West College and held at the Orange County Sheriff's Department. This training provides enhanced awareness of mental illness and provides an important foundation for future training. Officers at the Irvine Police Department also receive a significant amount of training related to de-escalation techniques associated with crisis situations. These scenarios often involve how verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as arrest and control tactics can be used to safely and effectively de-escalate a crisis situation involving persons with mental illness. These ongoing trainings are developed and implemented through the Department's Office of Professional Development. Based on trends and the needs of the community, the Office of Professional Development develops and implements new training plans during Department wide trainings held each trimester throughout the year.

It should be noted that the area in which police officers could immediately benefit from additional training is in the police academy. Currently, the Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) require a limited amount of training on mental illness and crisis de-escalation. Having a stronger foundation in the early stages of a police officer's development could benefit police officers when making contact with mentally ill persons.

F.2. Deputy Sheriffs and police officers receive insufficient training regarding Laura's Law.

The Irvine Police Department agrees with this finding.

Police officers are a key referral source to the Laura's Law program and better educating law enforcement officers will afford those who would benefit from the program to have a greater chance of seeking assistance. Since August 2014, the Irvine Police Department has employed a Mental Health Outreach Officer who is familiar with Laura's Law and routinely monitors people in the community who might fit the criteria for the program and regularly makes referrals.

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 a periodic refresher training. (F.1.)

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

The effectiveness of a 40-hour Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement may not be effective given that knowledge and tactics continue to evolve. Providing a weeklong training would offer some degree of knowledge, however, as we attempt to

integrate knowledge and tactics regarding crisis intervention into our daily policing strategies, the officers would benefit more from shorter, more frequent in-service Training, ranging from 4-8 hours. In addition, the feasibility of providing a 40-hour training to all sworn members of the Irvine Police Department could take years to accomplish, impose significant financial burdens on the City, and leave numerous officers untrained during the time it takes to complete the training. Therefore, training that is focused and shorter in duration can be delivered to officers over a much lesser period of time. Ongoing, periodic trainings would reinforce the information and techniques as well as provide up to date information on the subject.

In August, 2014, the Irvine Police Department implemented a collateral assignment for a specific group of police officers assigned to patrol, referred to as Mental Health Liaison Officers. These officers have received 40 hours of in-depth training related to recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental illness, crisis de-escalation, navigating the 5150 process (72-hour involuntary psychiatric hold), and knowledge of community resources for the mentally ill. With their more in-depth knowledge of mental illness, these police officers have become a valuable resource for other officers in the Department. They have expertise in best practices in how best to respond to calls for service regarding mental illness from the initial response to ensuring that the subject receives referrals to wrap around services promoting long term stability. The Mental Health Liaison Officers also work in cooperation with our full-time officer assigned to Mental Health Outreach. This officer works with a member of the County's Psychiatric Evaluation and Response Team (PERT) and an in-house licensed clinician to conduct follow-up contacts with those in the community previously identified as having mental illness and in need of services to prevent future crisis escalation. This proactive approach has been successful in preventing a crisis before it occurs. The use of the PERT team member in this manner, as opposed to its traditional use (assigned to ride with an officer on patrol) has been more efficient in our community, allowing the PERT team member to conduct more community contacts in a 10-hour period than they otherwise would have been accomplished during a normal patrol shift. In addition, it presents a paradigm shift in that we are no longer waiting for a crisis to respond to, but rather making efforts to prevent a crisis before it occurs.

With their additional expertise, the Mental Health Liaison Officers and full-time Mental Health Outreach Officer have then been able to share their knowledge and experience with patrol officers in the form of Department trainings regarding community resources, Department policy, crisis de-escalation, Laura's Law, and navigating the 5150 process successfully.

R.2. All law enforcement officers should receive mandatory and specific training regarding Laura's Law. (F.2.)

The recommendation will not been implemented, but will be implemented in the near future.

When Laura's Law was first implemented in Orange County, the Orange County Health Care Agency provided training for law enforcement on how to refer people to

the Assisted Outpatient Treatment program. The Irvine Police Department sent representatives to the training who in return passed along that training to their fellow police officers during patrol briefings.

However, we believe that additional training would be beneficial to ensure that the people who qualify and would benefit from Assisted Outpatient Treatment are appropriately referred. The Irvine Police Department's Office of Professional Development, in coordination with the Irvine PD Mental Health Team, plan to collaborate with the Orange County Health Care Agency on providing this information to officers in the near future. The method of delivery would be to provide this information in the form of a short, 30-minute presentation at regularly scheduled patrol briefings in combination with reference materials officers can take with them into the field.