



CITY OF COSTA MESA

P.O. BOX 1200

CALIFORNIA 92628-1200

FROM THE OFFICE OF TOM GAZSI, CHIEF OF POLICE

December 2, 2013

Thomas J. Borris, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana CA 92701

Dear Honorable Thomas J. Borris:

The following is in response to the Confidential Draft 2012-2013 Orange County Grand Jury report, "To Protect and To Serve: A Look at Tools to Assist Law Enforcement in Achieving Positive Outcomes with the Homeless Mentally Ill."

Please know that the Costa Mesa Police Department was privileged to participate with this worthwhile study. The community of Costa Mesa has sought to effectively address the challenges of this difficult problem. As such, the City has worked closely with Orange County Mental Health and other local entities to provide service, assistance and training to police officers, park rangers, Costa Mesa non-profits like the Church Consortium and the City's Homeless Task Force, to better serve this challenged population.

FINDINGS

(a) (1) The Police Department agrees with the finding.

Grand Jury recommendation:

F1. Although POST requires continuing education in the area of dealing with individuals who are mentally ill, it does not specify the number of hours of frequency of officer training; nor does it require that such training be documented.

The department ***partially agrees*** with this statement. POST related training in this area is tracked for each officer, in terms of type and duration.

F2. Field officers desire more in-depth training in dealing with the mentally ill on the street.

The department ***agrees*** with this statement.

F3. There is one officer- in a very few instances two officers- for every one-thousand (1,000) citizens in a given city within the County who are expected to deal with the full range of law enforcement issues of that city.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F4. Nationally accredited police departments police less than 10% of Orange County cities.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F5. Not all Orange County cities have at least one officer trained in Crisis Intervention.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F6. There is a broad spectrum of on-going training provided to patrol officers in order to develop their abilities and strategies in dealing with the mentally ill. Some departments provide minimal training; others have comprehensive programs in place.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F7. Five departments have their patrol officers ride periodically with the homeless liaison officer. Seventeen do not.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F8. Departments are reaching out- or beginning to reach out- to neighboring departments and to other skilled professionals, both in dialogue about the mentally ill and homeless issues in their cities, and to learn more effective strategies in dealing with these individuals.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F9. All police departments believe that on-going training should be supported by Mental Health Services Act Funding.

The department **partially agrees** with this statement, in that there is an inherent training load associated with such opportunity. While this is highly desirable, it may be difficult to staff for extensive periods of this training. Since the training is desirable, shorter in-service rates of training could be effective in offsetting staff demands.

F10. All police departments adhere to written policy, procedure and/or protocol regarding contact with mentally ill persons.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

F11. Policy and lawmakers in the County of Orange continue to examine Laura's Law in light of its potential impact on the mentally ill and citizens for positive outcomes.

The department **agrees** with this statement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Require specific continuing education for all police officers and sheriff's deputies in interacting with the mentally ill and homeless population;

- Orange County City Police Chiefs and the Sheriff-Coroner shall corroborate with the Orange County Chiefs and Sheriff's Association to set the type, hours and frequency of this supplemental training;
- Include Crisis Intervention Training (perhaps Memphis Model);
- Training is to be documented. (F1,F2,F3,F4,F5,F6,F7,F8,F10)

The Chief's Office will continue to participate with the Orange County Police Chiefs and Sheriff's Association to evaluate and set the types and frequency of training.

As to Crisis Intervention Training, the department will continue regular in-service training of personnel. As well as the use of PERT, TIP, Orange County Mental Health service workers who are assigned to the city, Veterans Affairs and aspects of the City's Homeless Task Force.

Training will continue to be tracked for personnel through the Training and Recruiting Office.

R2. All Orange County City Police Departments and the Sheriff's Department shall be accredited with a national accreditation agency within five (5) years. (F4)

The Costa Mesa Police Department began analysis of this process in the spring of 2013, through the Professional Standards Unit. The department anticipates evaluating this process with potential implementation within 36 months.

R3. The Orange County Board of Supervisors shall implement a pilot program for Laura's Law with the necessary accommodations to insure that the program will function effectively as an essential tool to help those with mental illness, thus benefiting law enforcement, and the citizens of Orange County. (F11)

The Costa Mesa Police Department will support efforts to implement aspects of Laura's Law and the potential benefits of the law. Please know that the department will continue to work with Orange County Mental Health, at the street level, to secure and encourage treatment and treatment course compliance with sound rapport and relationships with mentally ill homeless individuals.

Please let me know if you require further clarification or have suggestions for other methods of implementation.

Sincerely,



Tom Gazsi
Chief of Police

TG/vs